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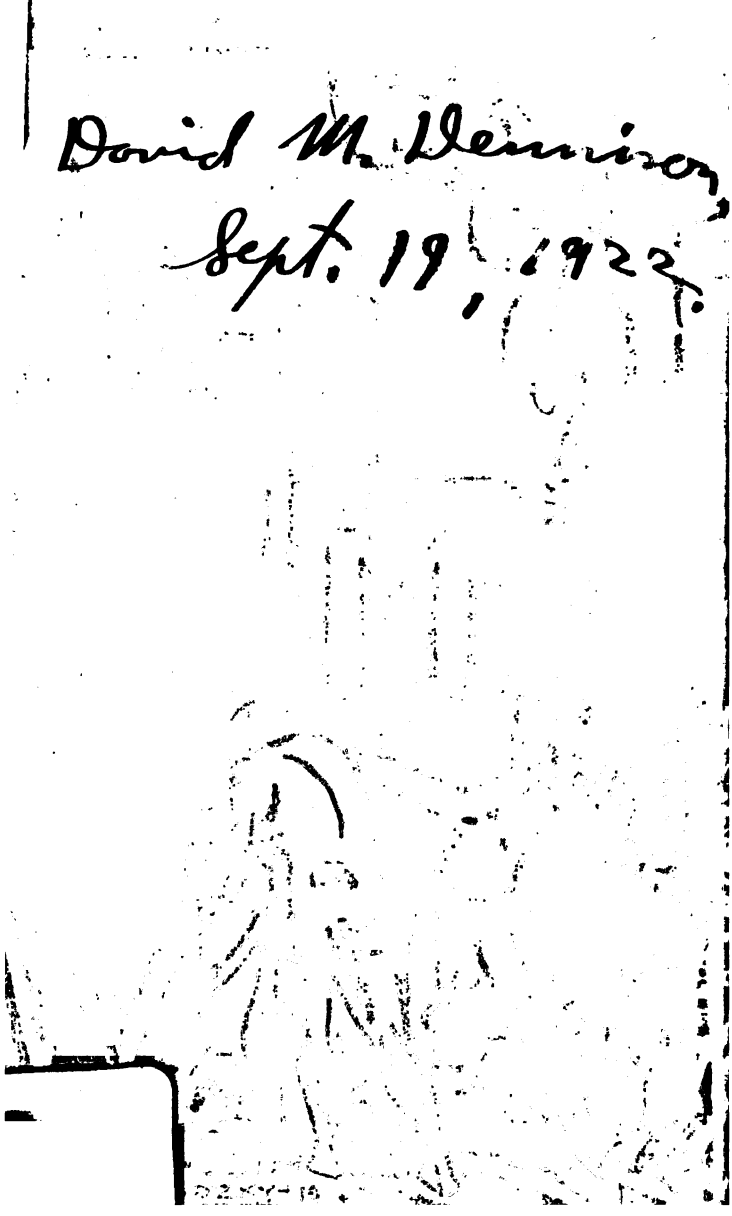

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JÖRN UHL

By GUSTAV FRENSSEN

Translated by F. S. DELMER

Introduction by LUDWIG LEWISOHN

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INTRODUCTION

The early novels of Gustav Frenssen, the country-parson from Holstein, scarcely rose into the view of the world of letters. Something of his peculiar and characteristic virtue was in them; but it was overlaid by masses of conventionally novelistic stuff. It took the theologian time to achieve intimate and direct self-expression. He achieved it apparently at a leap in "Jörn Uhl" which was published in 1902 and the marvelous and lasting success of which belongs even now and definitely to the history of modern literature. The book has been read by hundreds of thousands not only in the language of its origin but also in English. And it has been read and re-read—despite later critical onslaughts —by the thoughtful, the seekers, those to whom literature is more than an amusement or a toy. Quite indestructibly "Jörn Uhl" and the subsequent "Hilligenlei" ("Holy Land") belong to the major experiences of the modern spirit.

The reason for this success, for both its range and its quality, is this, that Frenssen transferred a permanent and necessary conception from the Church to the world. All men do, indeed, desire to be saved. That is, they desire to become reconciled in spirit to that universe of which their lives are a part. Such is the real meaning of salvation. The Church, taking the easiest way, seeks to reconcile man to his fate by negating its importance and finality and pointing to extra-mundane worlds of reward and completion. Its aim is to save man from life. But this is precisely what the modern spirit cannot endure. It says with Goethe: Here or nowhere is America. We must be saved through and within life. Our concrete experiences must

somehow hold the spiritual values that are to satisfy the reason and the heart.

Novels that aim to interpret life in this fashion are not rare in German literature. From Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister" to Gottfried Keller's "Der grüne Heinrich," every "Entwicklungsroman" or "novel of the development of personality" has had precisely this intention. What distinguishes Frenssen is his magnificent frankness, his universality, his peculiar method of presentation. Each of these three elements deserves a word.

He breaks with the Augustinian, or, rather, with the Pauline, antithesis between the flesh and the spirit. He seeks to heal the wound that historical Christianity inflicted upon human life. His people are entire people. They have senses, reason, emotion. They are not trying constantly to run away from an essential part of their own natures. If they are saved, it is the whole of them that is saved. The senses are accepted, the flesh is made beautiful and spiritualized. Criticism has pointed out that, in the pursuit of this intention, Frenssen falls at moments into mere fleshliness. The criticism would be unjust even if it corresponded to a fact. Modern man is a moral cripple who is trying to regain the use of his limbs. It is no wonder if he limps a little, if his gait is not at once and altogether graceful and harmonious; if shadows fall upon our hard-won neo-paganism, it is the fault of those shadows from the past, not of the light which we are bringing into a darkened world.

It is clear, of course, that Frenssen shares this basic intention of his with other writers in various literatures. He shares it, for instance, with George Moore and Arthur Schnitzler. But Moore and Schnitzler deal with the sophisticated, the neurotic, the revolutionary adventurers of great cities. Frenssen is a peasant of the ancient Saxon stock. His words gain authority from that depth of human life whence his inspiration is drawn. Out on the heath and dunes here, he seems to say, the moral perversions of historic Christianity never struck to the roots of life. We have wastrels and drunkards and brutes, but the ancient

Germanic peasantry has always been sound at the core. We can draw from it our examples and borrow from it those moods that we need for the fuller life of a new age.

Readers have not consciously made this analysis. But the facts and the spirit of the facts have reached them. Thus things immemorial and things new have become allied. Universality comes from the folk; the fundamentally is also the broadly human. The sectional novel, in its highest aspect, has the best chance of being not only a national but a universal one. The concrete, closely considered, is more far-reaching in its significance than the broadest generalization, and from simple men we learn most concerning man.

Frenssen's stories, then, combine two extraordinary virtues. They are magnificently full of the concrete stuff of human life—and this is almost the test of fine and permanent fiction—and they are woven about a central intention that is vital to very keen, though often dumb and distorted, hopes and desires of the modern soul. To these two virtues must be added a third, that of his manner of presentation, of his style. Frenssen is, of course, saturated with the narrative method of the Bible, especially with that of the Synoptic Gospels. But he is also saturated with Homer and with the methods of the folk-songs and ballads and fairy-tales of his native Holstein. But Homer is folk-poetry as surely as are the ballads of Holstein and so we find Frenssen drawing upon quite universal, ancient and closely allied forms of creative expression. He founds his style upon the style of the fundamental and spontaneous scriptures of mankind and he founds it also upon—Nietzsche. But "Thus Spake Zarathustra" itself owes not a little to the Gospels and more than a little to the Homeric poems. And so we find in "Jörn Uhl" and in "Hilligenlei" a narrative method that awakens an echo in every heart, and we find the characters in these books telling each other anecdotes and parables as men have done from the beginning of time. Primitiveness is thus achieved. But it is not gained through the craggy bareness and harshness of Knut Hamsun. Frenssen's primitiveness, unlike that of the Norwegian,

includes the profound poetry, the imaginative splendor that have always lived in the souls of the folk. Thus in his style no less than in his spirit ancient and new things meet; our subtlest strivings find their kinship with the beautiful, saga-like life of the race; the reader gains both liberation and instruction, and borrows from the records of very common men an experience to help him in his difficult and tortuous path. There are not many books in modern literature that offer us fresher and more nourishing art than those of Gustav Frenssen. They are like bread, and at many moments that bread is the bread of life.

LUDWIG LEWISOHN.

JÖRN UHL

JÖRN UHL

CHAPTER I.

In this book we are going to speak about Life, and Life's travail and trouble. Not the sort of trouble that mine host Jan Tortsen made for himself when he promised to set a wonderful Eider fish before his guests and couldn't keep his word, and then took it so to heart that he grew crazy and had to go into the madhouse. Not the sort of trouble, either, that that rich farmer's son went to, who, for all his stupidity, managed to learn to play ducks and drakes with his father's crown pieces to such good purpose, that he got through the whole of his inheritance in a single month.

No, but of that sort of trouble shall we speak which old Mother Whitehead had in mind, when she came to tell of her eight children, — how three of them lie in the churchyard, and one in the deep North Sea, and how the other four live far away in America, and two of them haven't written to her for years and years. And of that labor and travail will we speak that filled Geert Dose's soul with its anguish, when, on the third day after Gravelotte, he could not yet come to die, in spite of that fearful wound in his back.

But while we have in mind to tell of such things, things that many will say are sad and dreary, we nevertheless go about the writing of this book with a heart full of cheerfulness, although our face be earnest and our lips compressed. For we hope to show in every nook and corner of it that all the labor and trouble the people in it go through are not gone through in vain.

Wieten Penn, head maid servant at Uhl Farm, had been saying that a great gathering of folk would take place there this winter.

" But the strange thing about it is," she said, " that the people will come as though to some gay festival, and will go hence as though from a great funeral."

So spoke Wieten Penn. Her mind was of a strange, meditative cast, and she went by the name of Wieten " Klook," or " Canny " Wieten.

Klaus Uhl, the big, stalwart marsh farmer, was standing in the doorway in his shirt-sleeves, and looking away out over the marshes awaiting his guests. A self-satisfied smile lit up the shining good-humored face, for he was thinking of the jollification and the card-playing to come, and the punch-drinking, and all the spicy jokes they would crack that night. His slight little wife, with her worn, pale face, had just sat down in the chair that stood near the big white porcelain stove, and her eyes went wandering over the great rooms all made fine and gay for the guests. She was now expecting the birth of her fifth child, and was weary with the many things she had had to do.

The three eldest lads — big fellows who were soon to be confirmed — were standing there, long-limbed and ungainly, near one of the card-tables. Their heads were narrow, and covered with flaxen hair, and they had a peculiar domineering look about them. The youths had taken up a pack of cards that lay on the table, and were arguing in high, loud tones, with now and again an oath, about the rules of the game; at last one of them snatched the pack out of the hands of Hans, the youngest, calling him a young blockhead.

The door opened and the little three-year-old Jürgen came running up to his mother. " Mother, they're coming; I can see their carts."

" Mother," said Hans, who wanted to revenge himself on some one for the affront he had just suffered, " Jörn looks quite different from the rest of us, doesn't he? Why, he looks just like you with that long face and those sunken eyes of his."

She stroked the little fellow's short-cropped flaxen head. " He's bonnie enough for me," she said.

The little lad laid his hands in her lap, and looked up into her face. " I say, mother, Hinnerk says I'm soon going to get either a little brother or a little sister. I want a sister. When is she coming? As soon as she comes, you'll have to tell me at once, won't you, mumsie? "

The two big brothers went on with their game, nudging each other and laughing.

"And what do you think, mother? The stable-boy says that last night the horses couldn't sleep. He couldn't stand their stamping and fright, he says, and got up to see what it was. And when he came into the stable there they were all standing with their heads lifted, and at the far end of the barn there was a clanking noise, as if some one was dragging a chain. And that stupid Wieten Klook has heard about it, and of course wants to make out that there's something in it. Now I'd just like to know what it is that's in it."

"Oh! for sure there's something in it," laughed Hinnerk. "You just wait and see! There'll be another horse coming into the stable, and then the oats will be a bit scarcer. Do you see? That's what's in it."

They cast a sly glance at their mother, and went out nudging each other and trying to stifle their laughter. And now she was alone with little Jürgen, who had quietly seated himself by her side.

"It is not a good thing," she said, softly, to herself, "to happen after so many years. The others are grown so big and knowing. They are hard-hearted like their father, and have the same hard way of speaking. They begrudge the little being its life, even before it is born." Her eyes wandered over the tables and the piles of plates and shimmering glasses, and through the rooms with all their gaudy, half-rustic, half-townish finery. And she felt in her heart, not for the first time, that she was out of keeping with all this brave show and all this big, noisy house; and her longing soul took flight and flew far away over the marshes and the stunted dry heather, and home to the old farm on the moors. Yes, yes. That was the place for her.

There had been four of them under that long, low, thatched roof, that stood midway between the moor and the forest: her father and mother, her brother Thiess, and herself. And father and mother had been such queer, droll creatures, and had roguishly bantered and teased each other their whole life long. On Fridays, when the father came home from market driving his lean-ribbed horses, he used to stand up in his cart while still a good distance off, and threaten her with the whip, shouting out: "Now, for goodness' sake, little woman, do be sensible for once! Inside, I say, not out here in public!" But the little

woman had never grown "sensible," in spite of the fact that she was over forty. Directly he set foot on the ground, outside there, right in public, so that a man at work on the Haze Moor once saw them, she would throw her arms around his neck and hug and kiss him as if there were no one else in the whole wide world. And then the gaunt little man, with his small, finely cut weaver's face, would just laugh outright. They had never had an angry word, and had always been as loving and cheery as a pair of swallows in springtime. . . . They had both been dead now for many a day. And her brother dwelt there behind the Haze Wood alone. He was unmarried, and had his father's small features and the same droll and kindly ways. But she herself had left the lean heaths of her home and gone down into the fat marsh-lands while still a mere girl, and had become the wife of Klaus Uhl.

And now chains had been heard clanking in the stable.

"The three bigger boys will be able to look after themselves. They've already begun to go their own ways, like foals that leave their mother and forget her."

But what about little Jürgen and the child whose coming she was expecting? . . . "Wieten must stay by the little ones."

The carts were coming nearer: a string of three or four of them, one after the other, were seen approaching along the road. The sturdy Danish horses kept tossing and lowering their heads, and every time they tossed them the steam rose from their nostrils, and every time they lowered them they made the silver on their harness glisten in the clear air. That was the clan of the Uhls; they came up once a year at this time and foregathered under the old rooftree of their fathers to celebrate the Uhlfest.

They were not far off now, and Klaus Uhl, with a smile on his face, was just about to go down into the stable-yard that lay below the house, when a clattering, old-fashioned cart that had come from the direction of the village drove up.

"The deuce! who ever expected to see you here, brother-in-law?"

Thiess Thiessen pulled up and laughed. "My old turnout's hardly grand enough for the company that's coming, eh? Neither am I, for that matter, but I'm off again directly. I've been buying a couple of calves in the village, and thought I'd just look in and see my sister and little Jörn."

The little man was down from his high cart with a tremendous jump, and led his horses slowly and deliberately into the barn; then he went in to where his sister was. She was sitting in the back room with little Jörn, and was delighted to see him.

"Come," she said, "and sit down a little while. Here we're quite safe. Yes, Thiess! safe from the grand big Uhls!" she laughed. "Come, sit up to the table. And how are the cows getting on? Have you got the big black bullock as leader? Now just tell me all about everything at home, just as if you'd brought the whole Haze farm with you."

She asked and he answered. They had a good comfortable chat, while from the front room ever and anon came the noise of heavy footsteps and people talking, and the clatter of crockery.

"I'll just look in and see how they're getting on in the kitchen and in the stable. And Wieten can get me a bite to eat, and the man can show me the calves and foals. I am going to take Jörn along with me. But you must stay here, sister."

He took the little fellow by the hand and went out.

In the kitchen doorway a thick-set little youngster brushed against his knees.

"That's a Cray, I'll be bound," said Thiess. "You can tell it by his big red head."

"It's Fiete Cray," said Jürgen. "He always plays with me."

"Oh! then of course he'll have to come and sup with us, too," said Thiess, perching himself on the kitchen table.

They gave him a plateful of meat; and Thiess Thiessen took it between his knees, and the two children sat beside him.

"Is this your boy, Trina Cray?" said he.

The woman turned her hot face from the fireplace toward him. "Yes," she said, "he's the fifth. I've had six."

"Quite enough mouths at the manger, Trina, for a laboring man who has to make heather brooms and brushes to keep himself going in winter."

"Oh, well," said the woman, "I get all kinds of things given to me at the farm here to keep the pot boiling."

"You don't go home empty-handed then, eh?"

"No, not I!"

"Who's responsible for that, Trina?"

"Your sister, Thiess Thiessen."

"Does me good to hear it, lass; does me good to hear it."

"I say, Jörn, did you see," cried Fiete Cray, "what a dip my mother just made into the dripping? A lump as big as my fist!"

"Trina, that lad has great notions in his head. He's a real Cray; mark my words, he won't end his days under the thatch roof where he lives now."

"He'll have to go out to service and be a farm-laborer in summer, like his father before him, and then make brushes to keep himself in winter."

"Who can tell?" said Wieten.

"Ha! ha! now isn't that Wieten all over!" said Thiess Thiessen. "But take care what you're saying, Wieten. Prophesy him something good while you're about it. He has sharp eyes in that round headpiece of his, and a lively fancy, too, I should say."

Wieten Penn was as a rule reserved and taciturn. But she liked having a talk with Thiess Thiessen; for he was full of such a grave inquisitiveness about everything. "Strange things can happen to a man," she said, reflectively. "Once on a time one of the Wentorf Crays left his father's house — a working-man's child he was — and came to the Little People who live underground beneath the pines on Haze Heath. They loaded him with gold, and then led him forth again, and he came back to Wentorf. It seemed to him as if it was only yesterday that he had left home. But people told him he'd been away for forty years. And he could not but believe they spoke the truth. For when he looked in the glass, he saw that his hair had all turned gray. And, what's more, he died soon afterward. Theodor Storm, who always thought he knew better than I, used to say to me: This story is meant to show how a man can go away into strange lands, and be so taken up with the fret and fever of life and gold-getting that he can never get back his true peace of mind till it's too late and his life is past. But that's just nonsense. It's simply a story that really happened to some one."

"Jörn!" shouted Fiete Cray. "Just look! there goes another lump. I say, Jörn, the king . . . why, the king can eat dripping the whole day long."

"Laddie," said Thiess Thiessen, "just bide still! *You* say something, Jörn."

"I know a rhyme," said Jörn:

"'Stork, Stork, Mister,
Bring me a little sister,
Stork, or bring the t'other,
Bring me a little brother.'"

"Let's sing it all together," proposed Thiess; so they sang it and kicked their heels against the kitchen table, without noticing the while that Wieten had pricked up her ears and then left the room, and also that the kitchen maid was sent off on a message. It was not till Wieten Penn went over to Trina Cray, who was busy at the fireplace, and the latter clasped her hands together over her breast in the way anxious women are wont to do, that Thiess Thiessen noticed there was something the matter.

"What ails ye, lassies?" he asked. "Is anything wrong, Wieten?"

"The stork's here, Thiess, and is standing outside on the chimney-top!"

"Wha-at!" cried Thiess. He stared at Wieten Penn, his eyes wide with astonishment. "Do you mean to say the stork has come?" . . . With a bound he was down from the kitchen table; he tore the door open that led into the yard, and rushed away out into the stable. In two minutes he came back with his thin gray-brown old overcoat on, and his foxskin cap with its ear-lappets pulled down over his forehead. "Take good care of my sister, both of ye," he said, hurriedly. "Do you hear? Take good care of her. And I won't look too close at a crown piece or so between ye, in spite of turf and calves being so cheap this year."

"Won't you wait, Thiess, and hear how things go?"

"No! no! Give her my love, lass. . . . I've harnessed up and the cart's waiting. . . . I . . . couldna bear the sight of it. . . . I wish her luck, wish her luck!" and he was off. As he walked across the floor of the hall they saw him shaking his head, whether at the world, his sister, or himself, who can say? and the sound of his heavy trampling steps died away over the big dusky room.

The guests had been eating and drinking, and were now sitting at the card-tables. Big, homely faces the picture of health, and some of them proud and handsome enough. The three

Uhl lads were standing behind the card-players, looking at the cards; sometimes they were good-humoredly asked for their advice, and would nod knowingly, and join in the laughter, or fill up the punch-glasses afresh for the guests.

The players began to grow noisy in their mirth, and to tell each other jokes and stories in the midst of their game, and to play more or less recklessly. Little piles of silver coin were pushed backwards and forwards across the table amid shouts of laughter and curses. There were three or four of the men, however, who remained quiet and sober. These were the real gamblers, and they had made up their minds not to go home with empty pockets. Each of them sat at a different table, for they could win nothing from each other. Two of them were by nature shrewd and level-headed men; they are still living in their pretty, old-fashioned farmhouses under the lindens in the Marner Marsh, but two of them were crafty and bad by nature. They looked into the hands of their careless neighbors, and cheated right and left. One of them, later on, fell into the hands of Hamburg magsmen, who were still sharper and more unprincipled than himself; and the other is now an old man of eighty, and half-blind. He still plays Six-and-sixty for halfpence, in his son's cowshed with the stable-boy, and gets cheated to his heart's content.

The reckless ones well knew that they were playing with cheats, but of course they were much too grand and good-humored and offhand to make a fuss about it. One of them who had lost pretty heavily could not help remarking, "Look here, now, your eyes are a bit too sharp." But they would soon begin laughing again, and go on with their game.

Speech-making was scarcely the strong point of the company. They left "spouting," as they called it, to the minister and the schoolmaster. Klaus Uhl, who in his youth had paid a flying visit to a grammar school, was the only one of them who used to hold forth now and then, and was even noted for the jovial *bonhomie* of his speeches. He began by asking the company to excuse his wife for not having put in an appearance, adding that she had now gone to bed; but they were not to let that disturb them, but to look to it that each of them went home with a good handful of crown-pieces in his pocket.

"That's not so easy, Uhl," they laughed.

"And, what's more, as I'm your host you shouldn't grudge

me a share of the luck myself. You eat my meat and you drink my wine, and in my house you always get your fill of good victuals and good liquor. As you know, I'm just expecting my fifth child." At this they threw their great broad shoulders back in their chairs, and there was a chorus of shouts and boisterous laughter.

"Well, your acres are broad enough, and you've plenty of money put by . . . and wheat's going up. . . . Let the youngsters go to college, and as for Jörn, why, he must be our Provost."

Klaus Uhl laughed, and clinked glasses with his guests. Alick, the eldest son, whose head was muddled with punch, was smiling vacantly to himself. Then Hinnerk, the second eldest, left the room with unsteady steps, and came back carrying little Jürgen, whom he had brought from his warm bed. He held him aloft, and said, "Look, here's the Provost." He wanted to amuse the guests and make fun of the little lad, this late-born interloper. But they all rose to their feet with tipsy enthusiasm, laughing and shouting, "And a bonnie little chap he is." The child, roused out of his fresh sleep, was poking his little fists into his eyes and looking around him, dazed and bewildered.

"He shall be our Provost one of these days," they cried. . . . "Here's to his health! Here's to the health of the Provost!"

Hans, the third eldest, came in from the passage with drowsy, sleepy face, and approached his father from behind.

"They want to know whether you'll come to mother for a minute," he asked.

Uhl paid no heed to the question, and the lad went slouching out again.

"My guests are perfectly right," said Klaus Uhl, and he looked across the table with a knowing twinkle in his eyes. "It stands to reason, I can buy farms for all my youngsters when they're old enough to look after them. But I've had a pretty good schooling myself, and have had quite enough Latin knocked into me to know that book-learning is a mighty fine thing. So I thank you for your good wishes, friends. I'll do what I can, and little Jürgen shall be the first son of a farmer to sit in the house of the Provost. We farmers can well expect — gad! I say we can well expect and demand that one of our own class shall govern us one day or other; and if we can

demand that, then I'd like to know what family has a better right than the Uhls to give us a governor."

Again the door opened, and again Hans stood there. He stopped in the doorway, and called loudly through the noise:

"Father, mother says you must come to her."

"Don't interrupt me just at present, boy. . . . By and by. . . . As I was saying, he'll have an easy time of it in his youth, always plenty of money in his pocket, and so on; and then he'll be smart and good-looking, and have his head screwed on the right way. Faith! he wouldn't be the son of his father if he didn't. And, what's more, he'll take life easy, just as I do. He'll never know what care is, I tell you. Come, friends, let's drink a health to the Provost. Here's to Jörn Uhl."

"Here's to the health of the Provost."

"The health of the Provost."

"Father, the woman that's with mother says that we must have the horse and trap in readiness."

That startled them.

"Horse and trap? . . . Why! what's the matter now?"

"Has something gone wrong?" asked one.

"Come, let's put the cards away," said another. "It's already after eleven."

"Come, friends, I'm off," said another.

"Wait a minute, I'm with you," said another.

"Don't go yet awhile, friends," said Klaus Uhl. "It's nothing but a woman's nervousness."

"No, we must be . . ."

"No, it's time to be jogging."

A few still continued talking about their game, regretting that it had been broken up so suddenly and unexpectedly.

"I think I'll just look in at 'The Wheatsheaf' on the way home for a little while."

"So will I. D'you know what? We'll just step down to the inn together. We can go on foot, and let our carts come on afterward."

"I'm devilish sorry that I can't come with you, friends, devilish sorry," said Klaus Uhl.

"If you come with us we won't get home before daybreak for a certainty."

One of them went up to him and grasped his hand, saying:

" No, don't come with us; it's better you should stay at home with your wife."

He went into his wife's room, and found her fairly well. The people around the bed were saying that they hoped to be able to manage now without the doctor's help. Then he went back to the front room and listened through the door, that was still open as the guests had left it. Through the stillness of the night you could hear in the distance their loud shouts and their laughing answers. Once more he went slowly back through the great room, and again returned. Finally he took his cap down from the peg where it hung. It was as though a strong man were taking him by the shoulders and thrusting him out. He passed through the doorway and followed the others. He never wore an overcoat when walking. He had so much vigor and warm blood in him that he did not need it.

Immediately afterward Alick and Hinnerk entered the servants' room with a full punch-bowl. As a rule, they liked to play the master, and were at constant strife with the servants on the farm; but on a day like this they assumed a condescending sort of good fellowship, and would fain have hobnobbed even with the servants.

The head ploughman on the farm, an old gray-headed man, had seen the last conveyance off, and now came in. He let himself drop stiffly into a seat, and drained the glass that they set before him. The stable-boy was hacking at the wooden table with his knife, and anon trying to wrest a coin from the fist of little Fiete Cray. One of the guests had given it to the lad. The boy had fallen fast asleep, with his head on the table, and was holding the money tightly clenched in his hand, and only murmured occasionally in his sleep, " Leave me alone, Jörn! " drawing his hand back.

The dairymaid now came into the room. At other times she was gay and sprightly enough, but now she seemed quite dazed, and her eyes were staring wide with fright.

" Is it true about the noise in the stables last night, Dietrich? "

The man nodded. " I can't help it, Jule," he said. " I heard it right enough myself, but what it means, I don't know."

" I can't bear to be in the room there with Wieten. She's white as a sheet, and will have it that something dreadful is going to happen to-night. I won't stay here any longer — not another hour will I stay on the farm if things go wrong."

She took hold of the edge of the table, for her knees were trembling, and let herself drop into a chair.

"Hallo!" said Hinnerk, "now just stop that croaking, you. Let's eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die, as the parson says."

He pushed a full glass of punch toward the girl, but his hand was so unsteady that he spilt it, and had to fill it up afresh.

"Come nearer to me, Jule."

"Thank you for nothing," said the girl; "at other times you're too proud to know me. I'll have nothing to do with you, and as for your punch, you can keep it for yourself."

Alick looked up at her tipsily.

"You sha'n't laugh at me, I tell you; I'm master in this house."

"*You* master; you're nothing at all," said Jule Geerts. "You're nothing more than a stupid lout."

"What! you hussy! I'll make you pay for that!"

"What did Wieten say to you, Dietrich? She has been seeing lighted tapers, hasn't she? Do you really think it's true?"

She looked at the man with wide eyes full of fear. He made a wry face. He was "keeping company," as the servants say, with Wieten Penn, and had half a mind to marry her, but it worried him that people should say of her that she could see into the future and knew the signs of coming trouble.

"What has she been seeing?" asked the girl for the second time. She was shuddering with fear already, and knew that her terror would only be increased, but she could not help wanting to hear it.

"A week ago to-night, about nine o'clock, when she had just come back from the village, she saw the shine of lights in the big room. They weren't arranged as they generally are when there's card-playing going on there, but higher, as if they were placed around a coffin, and each candle had a kind of reddish halo around it. She didn't dare to look in, but you may be sure she put two and two together — and there you have the whole story."

"Stuff and nonsense! All stuff and nonsense!" said Hinnerk, wagging his head tipsily from side to side.

Suddenly they heard doors being hastily opened. Jule Geerts started up and shrieked. She remained a nervous woman for the rest of her life, it is said, even after she had had children

of her own; and as they grew big and the ailments of age began to trouble her, she always would have it that the pains in her back were caused by that night, and the fright she got when Trina Cray's white face appeared there in the doorway. "She looked just like a ghost," she would say.

"Dietrich, harness up quick, and go for the doctor!"

"Clear out!" cried Hinnerk. "You and your youngster, away with you both from the farm!"

He gave the little fellow a rough push so that he awoke.

"The poorest woman in the land is not so utterly deserted as your mother this night."

Dietrich was already outside. Jule Geerts crept away shivering after him.

Steps were heard hurrying hither and thither. There was commotion throughout the whole house. In the kitchen the smouldering fire was blown into a blaze. In the big hall the light of the lantern flew like a great red bird backwards and forwards, as if wildly seeking some outlet of escape. Now it would flutter up and down the wooden walls of the stable, and anon fly away over the horses, so that they became restive. Now it leapt up to the great rafters of the roof, and now again went rushing up and down the high-piled hay-sheaves. In the stables the chains of frightened animals were rattling. They heard the big door being dashed open, and the wheels of a vehicle whirling away out into the snowy night.

The sick woman turned her head from side to side uneasily, listening and asking for her husband.

"Strangers have to help me in my hour of need. . . . Are the children asleep? Has little Jörn been put to bed? So his father says he's to be Provost, does he? No, let him first grow up an honest and sober man — whether Provost or ploughman, it won't matter."

She had received her first three boys from her husband, impassively, as his gift, and so they had taken after their father. Then ten years passed by, in which she had drifted farther and farther apart from him, and learned her lesson of self-reliance. She had gradually ceased to look at Life and Humanity through the eyes of her big, loud-voiced husband. Slowly and hesitatingly, but, as time went on, more and more clearly, she had come to see that her own world and her own way of looking at things was infinitely more beautiful, clearer, and

purer than her husband's. The four people who had once dwelt over there behind the Haze on the quiet moorland farm — ah! what good and happy lives they had led there; but as for these, who were living here on the Uhl lands, they all seemed like lost souls wandering forlorn in some trackless wilderness. She no longer had power to prevent it. She had allowed the man at her side to have the upper hand too long. She could not even hope to make her own three children any different from what they were, they had grown so far beyond her control.

But, after all, she had come at last to her rights. For once more she had borne a child, this time a small, delicate-featured boy, and it was no wonder she had laughed so proudly and happily to herself when her husband, as he looked at the child, was forced to exclaim:

"He's a Thiessen all over!"

And this one, that was to come into the world to-night, was also a Thiessen; that she was sure of.

And it is a difficult thing for a Thiessen to make his way through the world. They are an odd and meditative folk.

"The three eldest boys know how to use their elbows. They will make their way in the world, but my heart is sore for the two little ones if I have to die."

She tried to fold her hands, and prayed in deep and bitter anguish that her life might be spared, entreating this thing of God, till the beads of sweat stood thick upon her forehead.

"Tell Wieten to come to me," she said.

The young woman came close to the bedside.

"Wieten, I may be ill for a very long time, and perhaps I may never get over it. If you would only promise me to stay here on the farm, Wieten Penn. . . . I believe it will be better for you, too, never to marry. Don't worry about the big lads, — you wouldn't be able to manage them in any case, — but look after my little ones for me, Wieten. Tell my husband that I have asked this thing of you, and that I begged him to let you have your way with my two youngest children, if I died."

Wieten Penn, whom they called "Wieten Klook," had foreseen the coming of many a thing. She had foreseen the hour of joy and the hour of sorrow, but not such a request as this. No one can explain, not even she herself, how she came to determine her whole future with such swift decision in those few moments.

" I will look after the children," she said, " as true as I stand here. You may trust them to me, Mistress Uhl."

She left the bedside and went into the kitchen and stood by the fireside awhile, silent and motionless.

Then Dietrich came in and said to her in his simple, dry way: " You don't need to stand by the fire all night long. The farm lads are all sitting in the front room; come and sit with us awhile."

She shook her head.

" No! It can never come to anything between us, Dietrich," she said. " Let me go my way in peace, and leave me alone."

Then he went out of the kitchen on tiptoe; and shook his head at the world for awhile. But he soon consoled himself, and has remained a bachelor all his days.

Then the sudden noise of wheels driving up was heard. The doctor crossed the hall, examined the patient, and made his preparations. He came back to the kitchen once more, and inquired where the husband was.

" He's down at ' The Wheatsheaf,' " said Fiete Cray, " playing cards. We've sent for him twice, but he won't take any notice."

The doctor scowled, muttering the names of certain animals. Nobody had ever before called the great, proud, jovial man by such names. Then he wrote three words on a piece of paper and sent one of the maids to the inn with it.

" Run," he said.

In the dim light of the big hall, as she was taking her shawl down from the peg, Jule Geerts read the word " operation."

Then, shivering and weeping, she rushed off, and kept looking behind her as though evil spirits were pursuing her.

Toward morning all was over. The grooms, pale and speechless, were cleaning down the sweat-covered horses in the stables. Wieten Penn was standing near the fireplace with her hand raised to her head. As she gazed into the glowing embers, she saw nothing but live flames there, for her eyes were full of tears. Jule Geerts was sitting near the wash-trough, quite motionless.

She felt afraid of Wieten and of every dark corner in the house, but most of all was she afraid of the little dead woman, lying inside there so still and quiet. The doctor had said to Uhl,

" Had I been sent for an hour earlier perhaps I could have been of use. Why wasn't I sent for sooner? "

Then Klaus Uhl gnashed his teeth and cried out like a wild beast. He lay wailing beside her bed and crying, " Mother! Mother! " As wife she had meant but little more to him than that. She was the mother of his children, and that was all. He had always called her by this name, " Mother." His children's need cried aloud to him in that one word.

Wieten stood in the next room, holding the new-born child in her arms.

" A wee little lass, but strong for all that," said Trina Cray. " One can see already that it has its mother's face, and even her dark hair."

" It doesn't cry," said Wieten; " surely it's not dead."

" Give it to me for a moment," and Trina Cray took the baby and gave it two or three slaps with the palm of her hand.

Then the child uttered a cry.

" Shall we lay it in my bed? " asked Wieten. " I have made my room warm. Jörn is lying there already."

They crossed over to Wieten's room, and found little Jörn quietly asleep in bed. He lay cuddled together like a hedgehog, all rolled up in a ball. The small face was almost hidden, but one could see his head with its bristly, flaxen hair. And near him lay Fiete Cray, sleeping in his clothes. He had drawn the blanket a little over to his side, and was curled up comfortably.

" The sleepyhead! " said Trina. " Has he stayed here, too? "

" Just leave him where he is," said Wieten; " I'll put the little maid at the other end."

And so the children slept that night in one bed — the two boys at the head of it, and the little baby girl at their feet.

CHAPTER II.

JÜRGEN was the name of the bristly-haired youngster, and the little girl's name was Elsabe. That was what the minister had put in the baptismal register; but the baptismal register speaks aristocratic High German, while all the people amongst whom these children lived speak Low German, and so they call him Jörn, and the little girl in the cradle they call Elsbe. And these are the names they still go by to-day, Jörn and Elsbe Uhl.

In little Jörn Uhl's eyes the house he lived in seemed a great vast place. When the child stood in the big hall, or trotted through the barn, he could see gloomy, mysterious corners everywhere. Nor did he believe that it came to an end anywhere; for him the hall was as big as the whole world.

And the grown-up people who come in, now through this door, now through that, are always doing such wonderful things, and with such grave faces, and so soberly, without screaming or skipping about or weeping or anything! It is simply marvellous! They are all different from him. Only little Snap, who runs along beside him through the huge room, is at all like him. They have their meals together, and sleep curled up close to each other, and from time to time — that is to say, every Saturday — Wieten puts them both into the big wash-tub together, and souses them up to their ears in water.

They are all so different from him, the horses and the human beings and the cows. He and Snap are the only two creatures that are exactly alike. Once, indeed, he and Snap were in hopes that they had got hold of a real comrade. It was a foal that was grazing near its mother in a neighboring paddock. They could both tell at a glance that the mother was another of those strange, grave, grown-up creatures, but in the foal they saw signs of a philosophy something like their own. But when Snap came rather too near the foal it kicked out. My! how

it kicked. Howling, they both made for the barn-door as fast as their legs would carry them. There they stood gazing with terrified eyes at the foal, both barking. At least, that is how Jörn expressed it. He never said, "Wieten has been scolding," but "Wieten has been barking," so close was his fellowship with his comrade Snap.

There was not a soul on the whole farm to take Jörn by the hand and explain things to him. Wieten had no time, and the others had no inclination. And perhaps it was just as well that it was so, for now it was a case of Robinson Crusoe. "Up with you, and explore the country, and discover land and water and tools and food for yourself!"

One sunny day he and Snap were out hunting in the old moat, with loud halloos, trying to catch a water-rat that was swimming there. They were both pulled out of the water half-drowned, and both got a thrashing from Wieten, and were both put to bed together, and barked and bellowed themselves to sleep.

That was one of their voyages of discovery. Then again, neither of them knew what a cellar was. They both thought it was a kind of bottomless pit, with great lizards for beams and uprights. One day, when they had laid a wager as to who would reach the other end of the hall first, and had started off with a rush, there suddenly rose a threatening voice out of the earth in front of them — great beet roots flew up right and left. With their accustomed unanimity they flung themselves at the man's head that appeared in the opening.

Later on, howling and barking, they sat together near the ladder that stood in the stable, and told each other about the dreadful things they had seen.

And so, between them, they thoroughly explored their farm-house realm, and gained considerable experience.

But one day this close relation between Jörn and his comrade underwent a sudden change.

Up to this time they used to go together, three or four times a day, into the back room, to stroke the little girl that lay there in the cradle or sat up in a chair, Snap wagging his tail at her. And then they would run out again, and trouble themselves no further about the child.

But one beautiful, sunny day, when Jörn had come back with Snap from a run in the meadows, what was their surprise to

see this same little girl standing in front of the kitchen door, gazing around her with wondering eyes. Never were two creatures more taken aback than Snap and Jörn Uhl. To think that such a thing was possible! They took the wee mite between them, and went with her along the road to a place where there was beautiful clayey water in the wheel-ruts. There they began to dig moats and build dikes.

From this time on Snap began to wane in importance.

Jörn now played all day long with this little sister of his. The dog became less and less of a comrade and more and more of a mere plaything. The little girl became acquainted with her surroundings much more quickly than her brother had done. He had only had Snap for a guide, and Snap was at best but an uncertain and unreliable leader. But the brother knew everything and could do everything. He led little Elsbe over the whole house, and into the bakehouse, and out to the barn, and even out over the stile into the meadows where the calves could be seen playing about. And one day he said:

"Come, Elsbe, let's go and climb up Ringelshörn." He took her by the hand. Snap ran on ahead, barking, and so they went along the road till the old hill-land rose up before them.

"Now for it!"

Up they go, toiling and panting. The pathway leads steep up through the heather. They have to take a rest on the way. Then an idea strikes Jörn. He will tie the piece of yarn that he always carries in his pocket to Snap's collar, and Snap will have to pull them up the hill. So they go on higher and higher. Now a sand-hole, now heather again, now high thickets of broom, which they can hold on to. Then they rest awhile.

At last they are at the top, and are just going to cry "Halloo" through their hands, when the East Wind, that they had not noticed at all while they were down below, catches hold of them. Up there on the heath he has free play. He rumples the little girl's hair and blows her skirts up, and pushes her rudely, and often topples her over. Jörn makes a dash to help her to her feet again, but Snap misunderstands it all. He is so stupid. He thinks they want to climb down again, and springs away down-hill. That's how it is that Jörn gets entangled in the cord, and the three tumble and roll head over heels down the slope, till they find themselves lying in a heap in a sand-hole at the bottom. And up above stands the East Wind

with his cheeks puffed out, bending over the edge of the hill, roaring with laughter at them.

"Well," says Jörn, after they have howled for a bit, "that was a nice piece of work, wasn't it?"

They climb the hill again, but the dog refuses to go with them. They coax him, they appeal to his sense of honor, they threaten him with hunger, and pelt him with sand and lumps of earth. He understands it all perfectly well, for he wags his tail, and shivers and barks pitifully for forgiveness. But he hasn't pluck enough. "Let him be, Elsbe, he's a regular cowardly custard."

They sit down on the hilltop, in the cold wind, among the heather, and look for awhile quietly down on the broad, flat marsh-land and the Uhl buildings at their feet.

"I say, Jörn," says Elsbe, "why haven't we got a mother? Everybody but us has a mother. What does a mother have to do, Jörn?"

"What do you mean, Elsbe?"

"Why, I mean with a child."

"Oh! she goes like this all the time, to and fro, to and fro, holding it in her arms; and then she says, 'My dear little one, my little pops!' and all that sort of thing. I saw one yesterday as I was fetching Hinnerk's boots from the shoemaker's."

"But no mother ought to stay dead. Ought she?"

"She doesn't, either, only when people don't look after her."

"Who didn't look after her?"

"Why, father didn't, nor the others either. There were a whole lot of people in the house, eating and drinking, and they just thought of nothing else but eating and drinking."

"Father too?"

"Yes."

"Do you know for certain, Jörn?"

"Yes. Fiete Cray told me so."

Elsbe keeps kicking the earth up with her foot, and is so intent on her thoughts that she can hardly get her words out.

"Are you quite, quite sure? As true as I stand here?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't he look after her, then?"

Jörn springs a little way down, into the heather, and says out loud, with his face turned away:

"Because he was drunk!"

Neither knew exactly what the word meant, but at home they had often heard their brothers use such expressions as "The drunken lout," or, "You were blind drunk, too, yesterday."

They felt it was something dreadful, and spoke no further about it. Presently Jörn said: "Do you know what, Elsbe? To-night in bed, when Wieten comes to us, let's both say together, 'Mother Klook!'"

"Yes, and if Fiete Cray comes, we'll say to him, 'Father Cray!'"

And then they climbed down Ringelshörn from mound to mound, holding on by the heather.

As they grow older the evening brings with it a new kind of life for them. They may now stay up for two whole hours after supper. And they sit in Wieten's little room, round the square table, and all the four sides of it are occupied. At one side sits Wieten, Jörn at another, at the third side sits Elsbe, and at the fourth. between Jörn and Elsbe, sits Fiete Cray.

During the day Fiete Cray cannot come. He has to go tramping far away among the marsh villages, selling brushes and heather-brooms and curry-combs. He has his wares in a little cart drawn by dogs.

But of an evening he comes over to the Uhl for awhile. He comes every evening. In the winter he is blue with the cold, and in the summer rather tired; but he's always in good spirits. In winter it is particularly cosy and sociable among this little company.

It always begins in the same way: Wieten lays a pile of stockings and balls of wool and mending on the table, puts the lamp in the middle, and pushes her mending to one side. Then she sets a great hunch of bread and raw bacon before Fiete Cray, who clutches at it hungrily. Jörn Uhl has never forgotten that swift, eager clutch, and the thin, frozen, boyish hand that was not always too clean.

One of the brothers comes in — Hans, or perhaps Alick.

"Fiete, you must come and play cards with us; we want a fourth man."

But Jörn and Elsbe cry "No! No!" and hold him fast.

Then Hans goes up to the table and says, threateningly:

"If you don't come with me, I'll tell father how you're fed

up here every night, my young gourmand. Your proper place is in the servants' room."

And then Wieten will give a sharp look over her spectacles at the gawky, half-grown youth, and point to the door.

"Off with you! This is my part of the house; and if I find you here again, I'll tell your father where you were last night, you young good-for-nothing. You'll be the worst of the whole lot yet!" And sometimes she'll raise her hand darkly. "I know all about you and your brothers. The time will come when you'll seek your bread among the stubble of the fields."

Then he laughs and goes out with a curse, and they have peace once more.

"And now Fiete must tell us about his day's doings!" says Jörn.

"No!" says the little girl, with a grand air of self-importance; "first Wieten shall tell a story, and then I'll tell you one, and then Fiete shall tell his."

"All right, then; fire away!"

There sits Wieten, turning over the pile of mending, stretching her hand out now and again for this and that piece of cotton, drawing the thread across holes that gape in the stockings, and telling one tale to-day and another to-morrow. And so it goes on. For example, it is Wieten's turn:

"When I was in Schenefeld, the farmer's wife used to tell us this story. 'There was once a peasant,' she used to say, 'who had taken a two years' lease of a piece of land from the devil, and the devil said to the peasant, "You will farm the land, but we'll let the dice decide which of us is to have what grows above the ground there, and which of us is to have what grows beneath it." Well, they started throwing dice, and, of course, the devil made the highest throw, and so he was to have everything that grew in the field above ground. So off went the peasant and sowed a crop of beet root, and when autumn came, what did the devil get, think you? why, nothing but the leaves. Very well! Next year they cast the dice once more. This time the devil naturally took care to get fewer points, and so he was to have all that grew beneath the earth. Off went the peasant and sowed the land with nothing but wheat. And when autumn came, what did the devil get, think you? why, nothing but the roots.

"'Then, of course, he abused the peasant to his heart's con-

tent; and at last he said, "To-morrow I'll come again, and you and I will have a scratching-match." Then the poor peasant got very frightened. But his wife noticed that he sat all day with his head on his hands, looking very worried and downhearted, so she said to him, "What are you brooding over, husband?"

"'So he told her all about it, and said, "To-morrow I've got to scratch with the devil."

"'But his wife said, "Just be easy, and don't go worrying about it. I'll manage him for you."

"'Well, now, what was to be done? She sits herself down and waits, and pretends to be in a great rage. After awhile along comes the devil right enough, and, says he, "What's the matter with you, little woman?" says he.

"'"Oh, deary me, Mr. Devil," says she, "just look at this here great scar in my beautiful oak table. My husband says he's got a scratching-match with another man to-day, and so he's been trying his nails here, and has torn off this great piece with his little finger-nail."

"'The devil gave a look toward the door, and said, "Where is he away to now?"

"'"Where is he?" said the woman. "Oh! he's just gone round to the smithy to get his nails sharpened up a bit."

"'Then the devil stole quietly out, and made off as fast as ever his legs would carry him.'"

During this story Fiete Cray and little Elsbe sat quite still, devouring Wieten with their eyes. Jörn was paying no attention. He was trying to stand one ball of wool on top of another, and kept on trying and trying, and heaved a great sigh of relief when he finally succeeded.

"My word, if he *had* come," said Elsbe, "what a scratching the peasant would have given him! Like this!" and she clawed the table with her fingers and tried to look terribly fierce.

"There's not much in those devil stories," said Fiete Cray; "but the little Earth Men, they're the sort of people I like to hear about. They're real good and kind, too. They've made many a man rich for his whole life. But the queer thing about them is that I've never yet set eyes on one of them — not a single one. Many's the time I've come through the Heath alone with my dogs, and on past the Wodansberg. And often

I've left my cart standing while I stole quietly into the wood, but I've never seen anything."

"They live in the Wodansberg," said Elsbe.

"I don't believe it," said Jörn.

"Oh, you believe nothing at all," said Wieten.

"Once," said Fiete, "it was dreadfully hot, so I left the dogs standing in the shade with the cart, not far from the Wodansberg, where the path turns off to Tunkmoor. I went a little way into the wood, and lay down on some dry leaves, not far from a big hazel-bush, and there I must have fallen asleep. Suddenly I was wakened up by a rustling among the leaves, and just as I'd got my eyes open it seemed to me that three or four little people, a bit bigger than squirrels, ran off and hid themselves in the hazels; and a moment afterward I heard voices in the bushes. It sounded as if they were saying, 'Sleepyhead! sleepyhead!' I sat up and looked around me, and turned all the leaves over, but not a sign of gold was to be seen."

Wieten looked at him distrustfully. Fiete Cray's stories always caused her a certain amount of uneasiness. He invariably contrived to give them such a practical turn — that was characteristic of the Crays. He was not content that such and such a devil should be out-devilled, or that some man or other, in olden times, should have got a share of hidden treasure, but he himself, Fiete Cray, was always expecting to get hold of money in this way. He lay under every bush and lurked behind every tree, expecting the glittering gold to appear.

Jörn looks up doubtfully from his play, and says, suspiciously:

"They were squirrels, of course; and as for what you heard, it was nothing more than some field-mice squeaking."

Fiete Cray shook his head disdainfully.

"If only I knew," he said, "how they could be got at."

"The woman in Schenefeld," said Wieten, "where I was in service when I was young, she used to say that the fairies had all taken their bag and baggage, and wives and children, and had wandered off together into another country."

"Is that it?" said Fiete. "Where did they go to, then?"

"Well, I can't exactly say. I fancy they moved to the Vaalermoor and round about Milstermarsh. Maybe they even crossed the Elbe. But Theodor Storm always made out that they had come to Dittmarsh."

"Theodor Storm! You're always talking about him; who is he?"

"Who is he? He used to say he was a student. He often used to visit us at Schenefeld — he and a man called Müllenhoff. They wasted God's precious hours, lolling about in all the villages, and were happiest when listening to some old story or other. They had their eye on me in particular, because they knew that my mistress had a store of such tales; but she wouldn't tell them any, and so they came to me. Every evening, when I went to the reed paddock to milk the cows, the two of them would be standing there waiting to hear stories. And while I was talking they'd go and drink half a bucket of the milk."

"What did they have to talk about, Wieten?"

"I've told you already. They thought they knew everything better than I did. There wasn't a single old saw that Storm couldn't give you in some different way, and he used to tell all these stories differently from what I do. He used to say he was going to write a book about them. Many a time I've called him a young blockhead, and left him standing where he was, and marched off, milk-pails and all."

Fiete Cray looked knowingly at her through his half-shut eyes.

"What was his idea about where the little Earth Men are?"

"What was his idea? What's that got to do with me? I don't care a snap for him and his ideas. My mistress in Schenefeld used to tell the story this way: 'One night the ferryman at the Hohner Ferry was called up out of his bed, but when he gets outside he can't see a living soul, so he thinks he must have been dreaming, and goes back to bed. Presently some sand or earth is thrown against his window, so up he gets again and goes out, and there, from his house down to the water's edge, the ground was nothing but a mass of tiny, little gray people. One of them, with a long beard, says to the ferryman he must put them across the Eider, as they couldn't stand the noise of the church folks' singing and the pealing of the church-bells any longer. So they were going to emigrate to the Marsh-land. There were no churches there in those days.

"'The ferryman let go the ropes, and they all came trooping down to the ferry-boat — men and women and children, beds and pots and pans, and dishes of silver and gold; all thronging on one another's heels, till the boat was packed full. And so it

went on the whole night long, to and fro, load after load, *and* they never seemed to come to an end. When at last they were all over, and the ferryman was on the return journey, he looked back and saw that the field on the other side was full of thousands of lights. They had all lit their little lanterns, and were moving on toward the west.

" ' But next morning, when he went down to the ferry, what does he see lying on the edge of the jetty but thousands of little gold farthings. Each of the little men had laid his fare down there.'

" Storm used to maintain that they had knocked at the window, but I said they threw sand against it. We had a great argument on that point. So I left him standing where he was, and took no notice of what he called out after me."

" What did he call out, Wieten? " asked Elsbe.

" He wanted to tease me, and so he kept on singing out, ' Don't waggle like that! Don't waggle so, I tell you! ' But when one has a yoke to carry, with two great big full pails of milk, and the yoke and pails both bound with brass-work, it's little wonder if one gets a heavy tread."

" Where is this man Storm now? " asked Fiete.

" Where is Storm? I fancy he said he wanted to become Provost. He a Provost! He's never come to anything! "

" Hasn't he written the book, either? "

" What, he? He was that lazy, that once he lay the whole afternoon, stretched full length in the meadows, from one milking-time to the next, and said he did it because the wood looked so fine in early leaf. It's safe to say that he's never written a book, and hasn't become Provost, either."

" Jörn isn't listening at all! " said little Elsbe, and gave him a poke. " Jörn, listen, I tell you! "

" Just look! " said Jörn. He had built a bridge from the work-basket to the table with three pairs of scissors and Wieten's spectacle-case, and was pressing his hand down on it to show how strong it was, and looked around at the others with pride in his eyes.

" I say, Wieten, what did Storm have to say about our Goldsoot?[1] Did he say the same as you, or something different? "

" I can see," she said, as she looked sharply at Fiete Cray, " you believe Storm sooner than me. You're always after some-

[1] Low German *soot* — a spring, a well.

thing new. As to the Goldsoot, I knew nothing about it in those days. I first heard of it after I had come here and seen it."

Fiete Cray leaned his head on his hand and gazed at Wieten. His round, boyish eyes, that generally looked out on the world so archly and impudently, were now dreamy and far away. The Goldsoot lay not far from the village in a hollow on the edge of the Geest. It was his one great, secret hope.

"I say, Wieten, do tell us it over again!"

"Will you believe me or that lanky Holsteiner?"

"Oh, you," said Fiete Cray, and struck the table with his fist.

"Well, just listen, then. It was like this. It's said that here in the neighborhood there once lived a very rich man, who died without having any children. But one dark night, before his death, he went to the hollow near the Geest slope, and threw all his money into the well. Now they say that if one pokes about it with a stick, it has a hollow sound, and some even say that if you look down into it you can sometimes see a little gray man sitting there, wearing a cocked hat. That's so. And once upon a time three men started off in the night, and without making a sound they dug down in the well, till suddenly they came upon a big copper kettle. Then they laid a crowbar across the hole, and fixed ropes through the handles of the kettle, and wanted straightway to pull it up. Presently a huge load of hay drawn by six gray mice came up from the marsh and galloped past them, tearing away up toward Ringelshörn. They shut their teeth together and didn't say a word, but kept on pulling. At last they had the kettle almost at the top, when a gray man on an old gray mare came by, riding up from the marsh. He bade them a good evening, but they managed to keep cool, and didn't utter a word. Then he pulled up his mare, and asked them whether he had a chance of catching up with the load of hay. Then one of them got angry, and said: 'The devil! it's old cloven-hoof.' At the same moment the crowbar broke, and down fell the kettle to the bottom of the well, and the gray man vanished."

"Fiete got some gold from the witch lately," said Elsbe; "you know, the witch that lives in the Hooper firs." She felt in her pocket and produced a shining coin, and laid it on the table in front of them. Fiete Cray stared at the money, and then turned slowly around, like a criminal some one takes by the shoulders, and looked Wieten in the eyes.

She raised her hand, and said:

"If you carry on with any more nonsense, you'll feel these stockings about your ears, and good-by to your bread and butter, once and for all."

He fixed his eyes on the table in front of him, and was for a moment crushed and silent. Then he began to show Elsbe the contents of his pockets. Soon they begged him to show them some of his tricks.

Jörn pushed all his toys aside, string and scissors and bits of wood, and said:

"Now for them, Fiete!"

"A trick?" said Fiete Cray; and while his quick fingers were still working under the table, two bright-colored pebbles, that he had found as he came along by the sand-pit, began to fly backwards and forwards over the corner of the table.

"And now another!"

"Another trick?" said Fiete. He held up his empty hands, and put them under the table again, and directly afterward a little gray animal with a long tail slipped, jump, jump, over the corner of the table toward Elsbe, so that the little thing drew back with a frightened face. But as it began jumping across for the second time, Jörn stretched his hand out for it, and held it up, laughing and saying:

"It's only Elsbe's old pocket-handkerchief!"

"Well," said Wieten, "we've seen enough tricks for one evening. Now off to bed with you!"

Without further ado the three went into the corner where the bed stood, and the two little Uhls began to undress themselves; and Fiete had to help little Elsbe to undo her clothes and to take off her stockings for her, and relate the while all that had happened during his day's travels — whether the big dog had been on the farm, and whether any one had given him any dinner, and whether the boys in the marsh villages had teased his dogs and pelted him with stones.

He told them with repressed rage in his voice how the boys in the marsh had again refused to let him go by in peace.

"Couldn't you defend yourself?" said Elsbe.

"No; they were just coming out of school, and suddenly they stood in a ring around my cart."

"Were they Uhls?" asked Jörn.

"Of course, every man Jack of them — from Dickhusen and Neudeich, and all about there."

"Couldn't you make a run for it?" asked Elsbe.

"The reins had got tangled, and so the dogs couldn't get away."

"What did you do then? Did they hit you?"

"They didn't dare come right up to me, because my dogs would have sprung on them. They'd have bitten them, I can tell you, if they'd touched me. But, all the same, it was pretty bad for me; the stones were just flying about my head."

"Poor old Fiete. Whatever did you do?"

"I suddenly thought of a plan. 'Boys,' I said, 'did you ever hear that story about the owls and the crows?'[1]

"'No,' they said.

"So I said: 'Well, listen, then. There were once four crows that sat in an ash-tree, near an old farm-house. It wasn't long before the owl that lived there looked out of his door under the eaves of the loft, and said to them:

"'"Good day to you."

"'"Good day," answered the crows.

"'"Have you got any spare time?" asked the owl. "Then I can put you in the way of earning an honest penny."

"'"Right you are!" answered the four, for the snow was lying old and thick over the whole country, and there wasn't much to be earned.

"'"My old comrade, old Tom Malkin, is dead," said the owl. "Now, I was thinking you might carry him to his grave. When my old friend was alive, he often used to say to me: 'Jan Owl,' he would say, 'you must give me a decent burial. A respectable life deserves a respectable funeral,' he used to say, for he was a highly cultivated man. Now, look here, you four have good black coats on, and are honest people — "

"'"Come along, then," said the crows, and crept in through the owl-hole after him one by one.

"'Now, it was pretty dark in the loft, and the thatched roof was low, but they could see old Tom Malkin where he lay. He was lying in the hay, stretched at full length, without a move in him. The owl took up his post at his friend's head,

[1] The pun on the Uhls and the Crays (the owls and the crows), which lends point to this story in the original, must be taken for granted by the English reader. It recurs throughout the book. — TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

and the crows hopped along, all askew, just as they do in windy weather among the young wheat.

" ' " Many's the mouse we've caught in this loft together, old Tom, that you well know," said the owl. " We've always been good friends, and many's the spree we've had with one another. But that's all past and gone now. Oh, Tom! Tom, old fellow! How you'd rejoice, and what a spring you'd make, if you were only alive and I said to you, ' Tom, four stupid black crows are standing round you.' "

" ' Then up sprang the tom-cat, and there was a crow-hunt, the likes of which you've never seen.

> " ' The first, he lost an eye,
> The second lost a leg,
> The third, he got his coat all torn,
> And the fourth flew out of the owlet's hole.

And that's me,' I said. I'd got my ropes straight, so I jumped on my cart and off I went."

" Well," said Wieten, " and now go home, Fiete."

Then Fiete Cray stole out of the kitchen door and away down the path, and crept into his father's humble cottage.

And then Wieten, too, goes to bed.

Toward midnight, or a little later, the father and the big brothers come home from their wild carousing in some inn. But the children have been asleep these three hours.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN Dominie Peters cast his eye over the hundred children of St. Mariendonn sitting there at his feet in two rows of benches, — the boys on the right, the girls on the left, — and when about three in the afternoon it began to grow dusk, as it always does in winter, then, I say, it used to strike the old schoolmaster that there were two distinct sorts of human beings at the Donn. The roof of thatch drooped like tired and heavy eyelids over the windows, and the light came through into the schoolroom in slanting meagre rays. In this silent slanting twilight you could spy, here and there among the children, a sprinkling of round red heads, with freckles so intense and hair so fiery red that they seemed to emit a kind of light. And this halo-gleam of hair grew brighter, and this dull sheen more vivid, when these eyes, shrewd and quick, or furtive and restless, began their play; it was like so many kittens gambolling in sunshine. Those were the Crays and their kin.

But you also saw scattered among the round red heads others not so numerous — boys and girls with narrow faces and fair skin, and with hair as fair as fields of rye just before the reaping; faces of strong and often noble lineaments, with steady, clear, proud eyes. When one of these light-haired children left his seat, his gait revealed a small, well-knit frame, full of litheness and strength. Those were the Uhls and their kin.

Pastor Petrus Momme Lobedanz, who had the care of souls in St. Mariendonn some hundred and fifty years back, used to wonder even in his day at this marked distinction. For on the last pages of a baptismal register, which he had filled with names, he has written down certain thoughts and observations as follows:

"The little thorps that are built along the sides and on the slopes of the Geest are nearly all called by the name of Donn. In order to distinguish them one from another, however, cer-

tain of the thorps are called after the wealthy villages which lie in front of them; others, again, whose existence dates further back, and which have a church of their own, are called after Catholic saints. Thus this village is called St. Mariendonn.

"To the right and left of the village the dune rises steep and unbroken, covered thick with heath and bracken, but at the spot where the village stands it is all scooped and hollowed out. It is as if multitudes of children had been playing there, and had undermined the sand-hills. It is the Crays who have thus, in the course of centuries, burrowed and scooped out this mighty sand-hill, and have built their dwellings into it and worn it down. For the Crays are a restless race.

"And since the land where they dwell is so light and sandy that sometimes in dry weather their gardens are blown like driven snow against their house-walls, and they are thus prevented from gaining sustenance from the soil, and since, moreover, they have little opportunity and still less inclination for steady work as hired laborers, they have come to be a race of wandering pedlars and dealers, known in all the country-side.

"Every Monday morning, when the sun rises, I stand on the Ringelshörn and look over toward St. Mariendonn, and watch the Crays taking flight. Some, with bundles and baskets on their shoulders, wander up toward the villages on the Geest. With backs bent double you see them plunging the long staff on which they lean into the sand in front of them. Others go down into the marsh villages with their little carts drawn by dogs. The wealthiest among them will harness some stiff-jointed, rough-haired jade of a horse to a ramshackle cart, and disappear. Toward the end of the week they all fly home to their nests again, and have always sold out their wares, nay, have mostly purchased something fresh into the bargain. One, who went out with haberdashery, comes back with a spavined horse; another, whose cart departed stiff with the bristles of brushes, returns with a load of basket-willows; a third, who drove down to the Watt to the crab-fishing, has got hold of an old chest from some one on his way through some marsh thorp or other.

"But they are sturdy folk, and I won't hear anything said against them. I have been intimate friends with many a one of them, and am so still with some. I won't hear them run down;

for I myself, on the side of my grandmother, who was a Nuttelmann by birth, have Cray blood in me.

" 'Tis said of them, I confess, that away from home they're not such strict and God-fearing folk in their dealings as they are at home among themselves on Sundays. Here in their own village, especially, they are honest, sober people enough, and even pique themselves on their fear of God and their regular church-going; and they will boast to me of their lively interest in God's word. But I, alas! I am but a weak man, and do not like to tell the boaster straight to his face: 'Man! don't you know that the whole country-side has a saying, "As honest as a Cray on Sunday?" '

" Folk about here say that a Donn Cray has never yet been known to buy hay and oats for his horse; they just let their beasties graze in lonely spots by the roadside and in the pasture-lands, while they themselves are taking their noonday nap beneath the roof of their wagon. And when a Cray is summoned before a court, it's always a court outside his own parish, and he is always the accused and never the accuser. But when such a one comes to me, to get his baptismal certificate in order to prove his identity before the court, and I ask him what it is he's accused of, he is sure to allege either the maliciousness or the error of the accuser as the cause of all the trouble.

" And when the accused doesn't come home after the trial, but mysteriously vanishes for several weeks, as if the earth had swallowed him up, and I meet his wife at church and I ask her, 'Antj' Katrien, where is your husband?' then she'll look me straight in the face, and say, 'Oh, he's just away to Hamburg, minister, doing a little shopping!' Then my weak nature shows itself again, and I don't venture to say anything to her. In the marshes, though, they have a jest about a man serving his time in gaol, and say of such a one: 'Oh, he's just away to Hamburg doing a little shopping!'

" These are things that weigh heavy upon my heart, *et animi semper æger sum.* But it's the more unpleasant to me, because they've got a report abroad in the marshes that I have pledged my word never to tell the Crays of their dishonesty. And in return, I am said to get tithe of all the profits they make on their peddling excursions. And they have a saying, too: '" Let's skip that," as the minister of St. Mary's said, when the youngster at school was going to recite the seventh commandment.'

'Oh, yes, you are an Uhl! You are an Uhl! You can do anything you like, can't you?' There he stood in the middle of the room, and slapped his hand on his breast, and cried, 'Yes, I am an Uhl! An Uhl, I say! And I thank God for it!'

"The Uhls despise the Crays, and the whole year round salute them neither with nod nor bow. Only once in the year, at Shrovetide, when the whole country-side gives itself up to woful buffoonery and heavy toping — then do the Uhls harness up their horses, pack flitches of bacon and pots of butter into the straw in the bottom of their carts, and drive over to St. Mariendonn, some with their wives, others without them, and carouse with the Crays, and are hail-fellow-well-met with them, going arm and arm with them from house to house. They call that 'yorting.' For a whole week, St. Mary's rings with shouting and singing. And they're all so good-humored and brotherly with one another, that it's often a hard task for me not to join them, and sometimes I've turned the corner and gone in for a little frolic together with them, *in finibus pastoralibus.* But on the seventh or eighth day their cudgels come into play, and a terrible row begins. The last fight is always at Ringelshörn; from thence the last of the Uhls are driven back down into the marshes. Then the Crays can call St. Mariendonn their own again.

"I cannot bear the Uhls. I tremble every time one of them comes up to the manse, and I am glad that there are not such a great number of them in my parish. Every minister that dwells in the marshes complains about them. But I, *quamquam saepe ab his collegis vexatus,* rejoice when I look down from my pulpit, of a Sunday, and see these red roundheads, this folk of dealers in rags and brushes and brooms, this Cray folk, all seated in front of me."

Thus far the baptismal register. Concerning Pastor Petrus Lobedanz's reliability and judgment, there is nowadays nothing further known.

Fritz[1] Cray seldom went to school. His father, Jasper Cray, had always some excuse or other ready. Sometimes he said he couldn't do without the lad to help him, sometimes he said Fritz had no boots. So it came about that he hardly went to school at all, except in winter, when Wieten would come run-

[1] Low German: *Fiete.*

ning over to the Crays' house of a morning, while it was still dark, saying: "There's so much snow on the ground that I can't let the children go alone. Fiete must go with them to-day." Then Fiete would jump out of bed, put on his old patched jacket, and begin with much kicking and stamping to pull on his big boots. But the old man would growl: "I tell you, I can't spare the lad to-day." "You can't, can't you?" Wieten would ask, viciously. . . . "Then I suppose I'll have to buy him out, as usual." She laid the three pennies on the table, which she had ready in her hand all the time. According to an old compact between them, the son got one, and the father two. So she went with the lad to the Uhl.

The three trudged off through the snow; Fritz Cray ahead as pioneer. At almost every step he turned around. He turned around so often that, counting the whole way, he must have gone further backwards than forwards. So much did he have to say.

Now they were all there: a hundred children, and Dominie Peters stood behind the school-desk. The singing and the prayers were over. And school was to begin. But at this moment there arose a disturbance at the boys' end of the room, just where a number of Crays shone in a compact reddish glow.

"What's the matter there?" asked Dominie Peters.

"He's twisted hisself."

"What's that you say?"

"It's Tönjes Cray from Süderdonn, who was looking out the window, and can't get his head straight again."

"Come, come, now!"

The lad sat there, with his head all askew, and pulling a most pitiful face; he kept opening his mouth wide and then shutting it again.

It must be noted that his mother had last night been telling him of a boy she had known in her young days, whose tongue used at times to loll from his mouth, like that of a dog exhausted by running in the dry east wind, and he had only been able to get it back into its place by catching himself by the throat and pulling downwards. This strange lad had naturally been a Cray.

Dominie Peters is not a man to be joked with; he had his eye on the youngster at once.

"My lad," he said, threateningly, "turn your head straight."

But the boy sprang straight upright, and kept gazing with head askew at the window, and bellowing, "I can't, sir! I can't."

Peters shakes his head at this fresh Cray enigma, and looks around helpless.

Then he notices that Fiete Cray, whom he hasn't perceived before, is standing up in his seat. "I can!" says Fiete. "What, you, Fiete? Well, my lad, then go over to him."

Fiete Cray left his seat. All eyes were directed toward him. He was wearing a sort of satinet suit, grayish brown, and patched all over, and his trousers were stuck into his heavy top-boots. He placed himself in front of his cousin, as though he were going to speak to him very solemnly. But of a sudden he raised his hand and dealt him a smart box on the ears, so that the head — willy-nilly — made a movement of fear, and became so movable that its owner could take it in both hands, and howl and weep. With measured heavy steps Fiete Cray went back to his place.

Fiete Cray was by no means a shining light of learning in the school. What he gathered of experience on his peddling excursions through the marsh and Geest was coarse-grained, realistic ware, and hardly of much use to him in school work, which concerns itself with the realm of the ideal. What he heard of an evening from Wieten Klook was old fantastic folk-lore, a sort of wisdom for which Dominie Peters — who was a practical man, with some money saved and put out at interest — had no sympathy. And, besides, the folk-lore that Fiete Cray imbibed had come to have a wild, romantic Indian touch about it, in keeping with the true Cray nature. But as he used all his practical experience with a sort of paternal benevolence for the good of oppressed justice or endangered discipline, the gaps in his book-learning came to be overlooked, and, in spite of his irregular attendance at school, he had got a certain reputation with teacher and scholars alike.

The big pupils were sprawled over their slates, tapping gently, whispering, reckoning, and writing down figures.

"Third class! We'll now have sentence-building. . . . Who'll make the first sentence?"

A little Cray stands up: "On our farm we have one cow."

"Repeat together!"

They all say it in a loud, shrill voice, each syllable distinct.

Those who have no cows say: "On our farm we have none." So it goes on. Poverty says "None." Well-to-do says "One."

Jörn Uhl soon noticed that he always said "one," and never "none." Nay, when the son of Peter Wick, one of the Uhls, made the sentence, "We have no stallions," and all repeated it, then he, Jörn Uhl, the only one in the whole school, big as it was, was able to say, — and he said it loud and clear, — "We have a stallion . . . and a bull." The clause he added, unfortunately, somewhat spoilt the effect. For many others had bulls. But it none the less caused great excitement, especially as Lorenz Cray's little girl, whose father had a large family, immediately afterward made the sentence: "We have no flour in the bin." Hereupon the teacher proposed they should take another kind of sentence. "We have read in the Bible about a king called David. Now, what's the name of *our* king?"

Then the little girl Cray, Lorenz Cray's girl, stood up again, — the little blockhead, — all eager to answer, and said: "Our king's name is Klaus Uhl."

The stallion had won the day for the Uhls. The bigger scholars laughed, the younger ones were dumfounded. But nobody had anything against it. The sentence was repeated in the usual way by the class.

But when Dominie Peters turned around and was going away up the passage the children called out: "The Provost is up." Sure enough, there was Jörn Uhl standing in his place, with indignant face.

"What is it, Jürgen?"

"My father is not a king."

"Very well, we must allow you to know," said the old man. When the children left the room, he saw that the little dark-headed mite, Elsbe Uhl, remained sitting on her form, and that she had laid her head upon the desk, and was sobbing as if her heart would break. He went up to her and asked, "What are you crying about, Elsbe?" After many attempts to speak, she said, "My father *is* a king." As he was turning away from her, smiling, he saw Jörn Uhl standing near with angry eyes. He caught hold of the lad by his stiff flaxen hair, and said, "Tell me, why did you say your father wasn't a king?"

"Often he can't stand straight."

"What's that? He can't stand?"

"No, because he often gets drunk."

The old man bit his lips and looked at the boy with compassion. "So that's it! So that's why he's not a king? But hark, laddie, you mustn't say that to the other boys. But do you know what? You must make up your mind to grow up hard-working and sober."

The children's yearly festival was a great day — a much greater day than Christmas. All the Uhls in the parish always looked forward to it with greatest zest, and the Crays, too, were by no means indifferent to its delights.

Who has ever taken part in those children's feasts at St. Mariendonn, I say? Uhl or Cray, let him stand up and confess that he has never seen the like of them for splendor and grandeur in any other place in the whole of merry Germany.

Now Fiete Cray had first of all asked Anna Seemann to walk with him in the procession through the village to the king's dance, as it was called; but afterward Trina Biesterfeld of Süderdonn had heard that Fiete Cray would, on that day, be wearing a real fine suit of clothes, which his father had picked up second-hand at some farmer's. So she offered Fiete Cray a threepenny bit if he would jilt Anna Seemann and walk with her. He agreed — that is, after she had given him a two-bladed penknife, which she happened to have, into the bargain. And, besides that, she had to promise to make him a blue sash for the festival. But after managing his own affairs so satisfactorily, Fiete Cray began poking his nose into other people's business, too, as was always the way with him, and wanted to arrange about a sweetheart for his mate and neighbor, Jörn Uhl, too, and made a great mull of it. Both parties would have nothing to do with him. At playtime he spoke to fat little Dora Diek, and promised her she should have "smart Jürgen Uhl," and hinted, moreover, that he expected a few pence as prize-money if the matter came off. But she said no, she'd rather invest her money in lemonade than in sweethearts. And she stuck to her decision, in spite of all Fiete Cray's persuasive arts.

In after years, when she was twenty, she looked at the comparative worth of things from an entirely different standpoint. She visited all the fairs and dances of the country-side, seeking for the sweetheart she could not find.

But Jürgen Uhl didn't answer to the helm, either. For the first time he flatly refused to obey his leader's orders, and told

Fiete, with remarkable decision in his tone, that he wasn't going to let sweethearts be palmed off on him; he would choose one for himself.

He stood three evenings, one after the other, in the pouring rain, under the eaves of the schoolhouse, and waited for little Lisbeth Junker, Dominie Peters's grandchild, to come out. It was she he was going to ask.

On the third evening she really came, and ran swiftly through the rain across the street to the store. Her short skirts flew up as she ran, and her blue garters could be seen. When she was on her way back, she caught sight of him from a distance, and cried over to him: "What are you standing there in the rain for, Jürgen? Have you been kept in?"

"No," said he, "I've just been waiting for you. I wanted to ask you something."

She came bounding toward him, and nestled close up to him so that she shouldn't get wet. And she pressed so close to him that she had to cling to his arm, and to look up into his face when she spoke.

A stranger was driving up the street, and saw the two children standing there, and thought what a pretty sight it was, and made his horses go slower as he drove past them.

"What was it you wanted to ask me, Jörn?"

"Oh, about the pigeon-shooting, you know. We're soon going to have pigeon-shooting again; aren't we?"

"Well?"

"Why . . . and then I must have some girl to walk with, and . . . and I don't know about whom to take. Of course, it's all the same whom I take. What do you think, Lisbeth?"

"Oh, and that's what you wanted to ask me about? I don't know about that, Jörn. It's not so easy to say. You're so big. . . . Do you know what? Take Trina Siem, or — let me think —take Jule Uhl. Or take . . . No, but she's too little for you."

"Whom are you thinking of?"

"Oh, it just occurred to me; but she's really too little for you."

"Just out with it, Lisbeth. It's all one, little or big, even if she were as tiny as you. Now tell me whom you're thinking of?"

"Oh! I've forgotten," said she.

And as she spoke, she let go his arm and sprang out into the rain, stopped and looked back once in her flight, and then turned

as though some one had taken her by the shoulders and spun her around, and ran away home.

He was mad after Lisbeth Junker, and was in fear and trembling lest some one should come before him in her favor. And he hadn't the courage to ask her, for he thought she would laugh at him, and say, "No, Jürgen, do you think I'd do that? I'll never go with you to the king's dance." And thus he let the opportunity slip. A few days before the festival, as he and shy little Dierk Dierksen were at the schoolhouse for private lessons, Dominie Peters said: "Dirk, my lad, I'd like Lisbeth to take part in the procession the day after to-morrow. I think she might walk along with you in it." Dierk Dierkson got a cuffing from Jörn Uhl when they were outside; but that didn't alter the matter a jot.

And so he was left without a sweetheart, and on the day of the festival had to walk beside a freckled little Cray, whom nobody else had cared to ask. His father, who was walking near the procession, looked at him with contempt, and his three big brothers laughed at him maliciously. Jörn walked with lips compressed, and proud face, and remained silent. The sun was shining, and a light wind came in puffs from across the heath. Flecks of bright yellow light pierced through the leafy linden-trees, gambolling and flitting about the streets, and playing on the streaming hair of the maidens. And the linden blossoms fell on them as they passed.

Who has ever taken part in those children's festivals in St. Mariendonn? whether he be Uhl or Cray, let him stand up and say now: Whose hair was it that gleamed and shimmered brightest? Hair that was dark and fair by turns, according as the lights fell on it, and her figure in the white dress looked beautiful and tall, and her face white and red, as though a drop of blood had fallen into whitest snow. That was Lisbeth Junker. And she walked in the procession in front of Jürgen Uhl, and now and again looked around and smiled to him. And he said: "There's ever so many linden blossoms fallen into your hair, Lisbeth."

Who is the little brunette, that is such a madcap over there, so restless and happy — a little too short, though, a little too broad, a little too wild, a little too noisy? That is Elsbe Uhl, and she is walking in front of Fiete Cray, and now and again she looks around, laughing and nodding to him. But to-day

she is not speaking to him; for to-day she is a rich yeoman's daughter, and he only a poor man's son. And by her side walks her partner, Harro Heinsen, one of the Uhls, too, a big, strapping fellow. He is already over fourteen, and is beginning to look down a little on the children's festival. He commences every sentence with, "As soon as I'm confirmed," for at confirmation boys are put into long trousers, and their voices have changed. So Harro entertains his little companion with all sorts of would-be wise talk.

Who, I say, has ever taken part in those children's festivals in St. Mariendonn? Be he Uhl or Cray, let him stand up and answer, What course did the procession take? — why, it passed through the lower village street. There is a good marsh soil, and on both sides of the way stand sturdy young linden-trees, whose tops almost touch from side to side. And who went on ahead of the procession? Why! a drummer and a fifer. The whole country-side knows both men well. For they usually hawk red-herrings.

Who was that walking by the side of the procession? That was Dominie Peters, with his white hair, a lank and gaunt and grave figure. Who were the people walking by the wayside, under the linden-trees? Those were the grown-up Uhls, with festive faces red with wine. And if their sins against their wives and their children and against themselves have been grave and manifold enough, in this, at least, lies something to their credit, that if they indulged themselves with frequent festivals, neither did they begrudge such days to their children. And who were the people walking on the other side of the road? Those were the Crays, husbands and wives, all alike proud of their children.

And who was it that was standing in front of the inn, you know the old thatch-roofed inn, as the procession came up? It was Ernst Rapp, the host of the Wheatsheaf, and he was standing there calling loudly through the door to his son, in a mixture of Saxon and Low German (for he was not a native of those parts), "Fritz! come down-stairs. The farmers are coming! You must blow 'em a tune!" And out sprang the fat and stalwart Fritz, and blew a merry melody on his trumpet. So they all proceeded to the great dancing floor. The children leading, then came the Uhls, then the Crays.

Up in the corn-loft over the stables the children were in the

mazes of the dance, and, as happens every year, the girls were once again a little anxious and frightened; for there has been a rumor for the last twenty years, at least, that the corn-loft floor is weak, and may collapse any day.

The two sellers of herrings are hard at it, with drum and fife.

How the feet are going . . . tripp, trapp, trapp. . . .

The lads stamp three times on the floor, with heavy top-boots. The girls cry out of a sudden, appealing to their partners: "Don't you hear it? There's something cracking. You mustn't come down so heavy with your feet."

How the hands are going . . . klipp, klapp, klapp. . . .

Oh! that's the Crays, they've got great hobnails and iron clamps on the soles of their boots. They're shod like horses.

The girls lift up their fingers, and in their innocence don't know what they are singing: —

"Laddie, if thou wilt,
Laddie, if thou wilt."

How the feet are going . . . tripp, trapp, trapp. . . .

"No!" say the girls; "the lads mustn't stamp so with their feet, or else we'll run away. The floor'll be giving way, and we shall be falling through on the horses."

"It's the Crays who are doing it."

"We do as we please," says Fiete Cray. "What does it matter to us what the Uhls think?"

How the feet are going . . . tripp, trapp, trapp. . . .

There is a groaning and cracking all over the building; bits of mortar fall from the wall.

Lisbeth Junker comes running the whole length of the floor up to Jörn Uhl. "Do you think it will give way, Jürgen?"

"Oh! rubbish!" he says, with a grand air; "come, let's have a reel."

Now they dance together, — a good long dance, — and have neither eyes nor ears for anything else in the room. At last they get so hot that they have to stop.

"Oh! you can't think how hot I am," says she, and fans herself with her white pocket-handkerchief, and shakes herself. standing there in her short white dress, and laughing.

"I'll go and buy you something to drink," says Jörn.

They go hand in hand through the throngs of dancers to

where Fritz Rapp is posted behind all sorts of glasses, and Jörn buys her a bottle of lemonade, which they share together. In return she presses a few peppermint drops into his hand, and eats some herself. And all the while they both keep wiping their hot faces with their handkerchiefs. But now their hands were so sticky. "No," she said, "that won't do at all; just feel them! Our hands almost stick together, and if you put your arm around me, my dress, too, will get dirty." She took her pocket-handkerchief, spat into it with pouting lips, and scrubbed first his and then her own hands clean. Then she showed him how he was to keep the handkerchief under his hand when he took hold of her. "Now let us dance again." So they again danced with each other till she was quite tired, and stood still panting and leaning on his arm a little. That was always the crowning point of good-fellowship.

He looked at her with quiet, deep eyes full of tenderness and happiness, and said, "Do you like dancing with me?"

"Yes," she said, "the others I don't know so well. But I know you, Jörn, because you always come to grandfather for extra lessons. You are the sharpest and best of them all."

He grew red, and said, "You are the best of them, that I know for certain."

"Look!" she said. "Do you see Elsbe? Elsbe is so wild, and that I don't like."

"Yes," he said, "with Harro Heinsen. That sort of thing doesn't suit me at all. That's why I can always get on so well with you, Lisbeth, because you're always so quiet and sensible."

So the children go on dancing with one another, till the grown-up youths come up into the loft, and gradually oust the others from it. By ten o'clock it was quite dark, and the children had retired from the field. Lisbeth had left some time before with her grandfather. Jörn turns to Fiete Cray.

"I am going home. Where is Elsbe?"

"Where's Elsbe?" says Fiete, angrily. "Why, she's stolen away somewhere with Harro Heinsen."

They went through the skittle alley as far as the entrance to the garden, where all was as dark as pitch, and called her name; but not a leaf stirred. Then Fiete Cray said, in a low, but perfectly clear voice, "If you don't come at once, Elsbe, I'll say out aloud that you're in the garden with Harro Hein-

sen." Then stealing footsteps are heard, and a moment afterward Elsbe appears, and says, with assumed nonchalance, "Oh! Is it you? I thought I heard some one calling."

"Yes, it's we, and you must come home with us at once."

Then Harro Heinsen came out from among the trees.

"We're coming over to Ringelshörn next Sunday afternoon!" says he, threateningly. "Then you Crays shall get the hammering that you deserve after to-day's doings." Before he disappeared he again shouted back his threats through the dark, and they heard something, too, about "Keep the ring safe!" Then he was gone, away along the track behind the house, and the three others started for home.

"What! has he given you a ring, then?" asked Fiete Cray. And then, in a tone of commiseration, "Let us have a look at it, Elsbe, dear! Is it silver?"

"What's that to do with you?" says she, haughtily.

"Oh, but you ought to let me have a look, Elsbe!"

"It's gold. Do you see?"

"Oh, sweetie, and such a ring! Do you think it's real gold, though? What would you say the thing's worth? Not much. Fivepence at most."

"There you're out of it by a long chalk," said Elsbe. "Why, it's worth ten shillings."

"What a donkey, to go giving you a ring. Why, what do you want with a ring? If he'd given you a pair of rabbits, now, it would have been something like. I say, Elsbe, have you seen my two young rabbits? You know, the two gray-blueys?" Then in her fear she runs over to Jörn's side: "Jörn! Fiete wants to swap with me again."

The whole afternoon, while the children were dancing, the two clans of the Uhls and the Crays had, according to their old custom, remained sitting in two separate rooms, which were divided by a wide door. But when the children had gone home, and the punch the Uhls had drunk, together with that which they had sent over to the Crays' room, began to take effect, the most venturesome of the Crays took his glass and went over into the other room where the Uhls were, and sat himself down among them.

This year Jochen Cray was the first to go. He came in with high-flushed face, and cast defiant, lordly glances over the Uhls.

Then he sat down mute and stiff by the side of his neighbor Klaus Uhl, putting his glass down with a bang on the table.

"I am going to sit here a bit!" he said.

The Uhls laughed, and one of them shouted out, "The first Cray has taken flight." One by one the others followed, and now they were all sitting in sociable confusion, Uhls and Crays together.

Once a year, on this special night, namely, do the Uhls and Crays sit side by side, and call each other "Thou," and "mien lewe Nahwer,"[1] and love each other like brothers, singing their old songs together, and even at times embracing. That will last some three or four hours.

But then comes a disturbance. Some Cray or other will begin to give his dear neighbor "a piece of his mind about him," and soon all the Crays are busily engaged, with their glib, sharp tongues, in rooting up every shady story they can get hold of about the Uhls; like oxen that mouth about wantonly among the fresh oat straw put into their mangers. They ease their minds of everything that's happened between them and the Uhls during the year; and unburden themselves of all their stored-up grumblings and grievances, which are by no means few in number. Coarse, subtle, general, particular, their remarks are everything by turns. They demand a reckoning from every Uhl for every shortcoming during the whole year. One they'll gibe about his wife being a skinflint, who'll haggle two hours about the price of a heather broom and a reed mat; another they'll show that he hasn't driven a single shrewd bargain the whole year around, either on his farm or at the market; a third they'll remind of old ridiculous things he's done, so that the blood flies into his cheeks with shame; and finally they prophesy the downfall and decay of the Uhls and all their belongings. "Not a man of you will end his days on his own farm. You'll squander and guzzle yourselves out of house and home, as true as our name is Cray."

Then the Uhls jump up; the Crays, too, spring from their seats. Fritz Rapp, seeing the storm brewing, has already put the glasses and punch-bowls away into a place of safety, and looks sociably on from his vantage-ground behind the counter upon the battle.

But what's the good of it all? Next morning the Crays ask

[1] My dear neighbor.

themselves: Where are we to sell our heather-brooms, and halters, and currycombs? And the same man, who that feast-night had been so loud-voiced and bitter in his gibes, now stands once more with most grave and humble face in the wide halls of the Uhls, and modestly offers them his wares. And although at first he gets growled at here and there, he is sure to come again. And gradually the brawl between them is forgotten. Only one or another, perhaps, will avoid a certain farm for a year or so, because the owner has struck his fist too hard on the table, and sworn that, "If that scoundrel comes here again, by heaven! he'll fling him, dogs and all, into the old moat."

CHAPTER IV.

It was Wieten Penn's voice calling in shrill tones across the farmyard: "The children want to go over to Thiess Thiessen's again."

Klaus Uhl, who was sitting in his cart, about to drive into town (which he did every afternoon), laughed, and said:

"Let 'em go where they like! If they'd rather be out there on the hungry moors than here on the fat marsh-land, then let 'em go, Wieten, don't stop 'em."

"Now, children, you can at least wait until I have cut some bread and butter for you."

They stood first on one foot, then on the other, they were so impatient to be off. At last Wieten came in with the bread and butter.

"Fiete!" said she, "come over here to me!" He came up close to her, and she shook her clenched fist in his face and said to him, in a whisper: "You just take care, now, and don't go telling the children any of those make-up stories of yours." Then she stuck the bread into Jörn's pocket. "You're the most sensible one, Jörn. When you get there, tell your uncle Thiess he's not to go carrying on with you in such a silly way, and that he's to send you home in good time."

"Well," said Fiete, "now we're off at last!" He stuck his two fingers in his mouth, and gave a shrill whistle to the two girls who had gone on ahead, and were already on the rise of the road that goes to Ringelshörn. And one of the girls looked around and waved her hand, and that was Elsbe Uhl. But the other went on steadily plodding up the hill, taking care that her skirt didn't get dirty, and that was Lisbeth Junker.

She went to school with the other children, but kept somewhat apart from them, and always spoke High German. Fiete Cray did not like to have her with them. "She's too prim. If I happen to let out an oath, she'll pout and say, 'Fie, for

shame, Fiete, how can you say such things!' She's always frightened lest her hands should get dirty, or the wind should tousle her hair."

But Jörn liked her and wanted her with them. She was not quite so old as Elsbe, and was always getting into some scrape or other. Then she used to cry out in a shrill but sweet voice for Jörn to come and help her: more than likely that was the chief reason why he liked her so well.

"Oh, there you are!" said Elsbe, as the lads came up over the edge of the hill and stood by her side on the heath. "Which way do we go now, Fiete?"

"Follow your noses, girls," said Fiete. "We'll make for that tree yonder." And he pointed to a tree right away on the horizon.

It's a puzzle for them, and it's Fiete Cray's great claim to glory, how they always come out at Thiess Thiessen's, who lives somewhere away over there on the moors behind the woods; and they come out there, no matter what haphazard path they take across the trackless heath and through the wood, which they enter just wherever they happen to strike it.

Goodness! what if they should come upon cannibals! or fall in with one of those robbers' dens that are still to be found in the northern part of the wood! . . . Twice on his peddling excursions has Fiete Cray come across such a den, and once, sure enough, the witch Black Margaret met him. She had caught sight of him, and had made the sign which should pin him to the spot where he stood forever. But he had fortunately known the spell which could cross her power. "You must say it thrice," he said, and he said it thrice. It was a very coarse expression.

"Fie, for shame, Fiete!" cried Lisbeth. "How can you say such things?"

Fiete made a vague apologetic gesture with his hand.

"The wild woman of the forest then fell into a great rage, and pelted me with stones. Just come and see! it isn't far; the place is just over there! I can show you the stones still lying there."

But Lisbeth wouldn't go with them.

"You can all come. You needn't be afraid."

Wide-eyed with fear, they followed him, Lisbeth farthest behind.

"I'm not going any farther," said she.

Jörn turned back to her, and drew her along by the hand.

"You twitter like a little bird, Rain-tweet," said he.

"I don't like you at all to-day," she said, "I'm going to turn back."

"Just stay here, Lisbeth," he said, "we'll be back in a moment."

She sat down on a little mound, and the others went on; and, just as Fiete had said, half-hidden in the heather they found a heap of stones, which sun and wind and rain had bleached for many a day.

"Well," said Jörn, "at any rate, she must have had a pretty tolerable fist if she could throw *those* stones."

Just then there came a gust of wind out of the woods.

"Away!" cries Fiete, and they all scamper off as fast as they can go through the heather, and arrive panting at the mound where Lisbeth Junker is standing half in terror, ready to run, too. Then they all laugh at Lisbeth, and lie down against the mound.

"What was that about old Margaret?" asked Elsbe.

"Oh, yes," said Fiete, "it's a couple of years since then. I was over to Kuden and Bokholt with my dogs and the cart, selling brushes and clothes-pegs, and evening came on before I got back. So I went quite softly along the edge of the pines. I didn't venture to go through; for between the tree-trunks it was all black, it kept going backwards and forwards between the trunks, as long and thin as crowbars, and as slow as the minister when he goes up to the altar. So at last I came to the big sand-pit; you know, not far from Grossenrade, there where the minister stands."

"What's that?" asked Elsbe. "What minister?"

"Oh! do you want to hear that first? Then I'll just have to tell the other afterward. . . . Well, the minister in Kuden was to administer the Last Sacrament to a man in Grossenrade. But when he'd got as far as the sand-pit, he happened to turn and look around. From there you can see a great way, as far as Hamburg. Why, once when it was clear weather I made out what o'clock it was by the Hamburg church-tower. Well! the minister looked around, and what do you think he saw? His house in flames, burning like mad! Now, he's got books in his house that can't be bought anywhere in the wide world. I dare say you know there are books full of the secrets how men

can get tremendously wise and rich. The minister had books like that. There he was, you see! Should he turn back and save his books, or should he go on and give the dying man the Sacrament. Well, he thought too much of his books, and turned back home and saved them, and the man died without the Sacrament. From that day forth, however, the minister couldn't get to sleep any more, and soon died, and went to hell. But the devil wouldn't have him there, and put him in the big sand-pit instead.

"Well, as I was saying, I came close up. I felt a bit eerie, I can tell you. First a crow that sat on a pine screamed Ma-rk! Ma-ark! but I saw nothing special to mark. Then an owl that sat on a birch, you know, — one of the little ones, — it cried, shrill and loud, Heed! Heed! But I thought to myself I must get past somehow. Then a cat cried; it was sitting on a gate-post, and said Ow! Ow! But I thought to myself, Let come what will! And right there stood the minister, up there by the sand-pit. He kept changing feet, and when he stood on his left leg he looked toward Kuden, and when he stood on his right leg he looked toward Rade."

Fiete Cray looked from one to the other.

"But you were going to tell us about the old woman?"

"Oh! I'll tell you that another time," he said. "Honor bright; we must now be off again, else it will be too late when we get to Haze Farm. But where shall we strike into the wood? Through we'll have to go. But whereabouts?"

It was always the same thing. Whenever they had to go through the wood he always managed to work them up to such a pitch that the girls entered it in terror, and so that even Jörn was somewhat shaky. Crouching close together, they hurried through the forest. Fiete Cray's eyes spied left and right into the gloom, as though he were every moment expecting a troop of demons to burst forth. Elsbe had clutched his hand, and kept looking up at him with frightened eyes. Lisbeth Junker came so close behind, and kept peering so anxiously around on all sides, that she several times trod on the heels of those in front. Jörn came last. He was inclined to distrust the truth of Fiete Cray's stories, or at least to look on them as grossly exaggerated. But he didn't venture to say so, for he didn't feel himself a match for Fiete Cray's stock of words and experience. But he wanted to show his disdain, all the same, so he said to Lis-

beth: "You go in front, Lisbeth! I'll go last." But he often looked behind him of a sudden, clearly hearing steps behind him.

At last the light of open fields glimmered through the trees. "Now run for it!" said Fiete. And as fast as ever they could they ran on between the pine trunks, reaching the open track, saw the Haze Farm lying below in the moorland, and screamed and shouted and waved their caps and handkerchiefs.

An earthen mound winds like a great snake down between the fields into the moor. It's bad walking on it, for clustering heath and broom and blackberry bushes have grown lush and thick all over it. But just for that very reason the children prefer to walk along on top of it, following it down into the moor. At last, when walking grows too difficult, they risk a leap into the bushes, and spring down from the mound, — Lisbeth with Jörn's help, — and make toward the piles of turf which lie alongside the broad black ditches. And there in the grass lies Thiess Thiessen, in the shade of a pile of turf, his cap over his face and his gun lying beside him.

They steal up to him on tiptoe and stand around him. "He has been going to come to meet us," whispers Elsbe, "then he has thought he'd just lie down a few seconds, and has fallen off to sleep. He's one of the seven sleepers, and does everything different from every one else."

"Let's all shout out together of a sudden," says Jörn, "then he'll get no end of a shock! You just see!"

"Hollo . . . oh!"

Like a frightened hare that leaps from its form, Thiess bounded from the ground.

"What's that!" he almost screamed.

"Thiess!" cried Elsbe, "do try and pull a different face. That one's *too* funny."

Then he picked up his gun, and managed to find his tongue again. "I was going to come and meet you; but this place downright invited me into it. 'Thiess,' it said, 'come and have a lie down. They won't be coming yet awhile.'" His dry, shrewd face beamed with smiles, and his little bright eyes twinkled and glittered. "Fiete, man, it's just splendid that you've all come."

"Is the boat finished, Thiess?"

"She's all ready," said he, "and right as a trivet. . . . There was once a time when I thought I was cut out for a sailor,

children. But I got seasick from merely standing on the Dikes and looking at the Elbe. Then I went as 'prentice-boy to Klausen, the shipwright, in Brunsbüttel, and everything would have gone splendidly, and I would have had a shipyard of my own and been a rich man by this if it hadn't been for these dash'd sleeping-fits. Don't you be laughing, now, Fiete, you're too stupid to know what I mean. I can quite understand that story about the Sleeping Beauty, how all of them fell asleep for a hundred years; I can sing you a song about it, too. And, besides, in those years I didn't grow gradually, as a youth ought to, but shot up, lanky and slim, for all the world like a crow-bar, as if my sole object was to touch the ceiling. As long as we were laying the keel we got on tolerably well, and I managed to keep awake. But as soon as the first plank was laid, when the plank made that curve, you know, Fiete, it seemed to me as though it were laying itself out so invitingly, just for my sake, and saying to me, 'Come and have a lie down, Thiess Thiessen.' In a word, I was no good for a shipwright, I mean in those particular years, not the slightest! I have still the document at home, children, Master Klausen's certificate: 'On account of chronic sleeping-fits, etc.,' that's how it runs. So I was sent home, and before I reached this old thatch-cottage, I slept over there in the Haze Wood thirteen hours at a stretch beneath the blackberry bushes. Later on I thought I'd like to go to the grammar school; for, by hook or by crook, I wanted to see the world. And I thought to myself, 'A good scholar has the whole world open to him;' if you go to school you'll learn Latin, and that's as handy as learning to swim. Done, then! Not quite so fast, though! First came the private lessons from the old minister. That went fine. For he knew my failing, and put the lessons between six and eight of a morning and four and six of an evening, when I was least sleepy. I really learnt something, as you know. There's many a Latin word I can still say."

"*Adsum,*" said Fiete Cray, "*that's I.*"

"There's no need for you to poke fun, Fiete. Do you mean to say that's the only Latin word I know, then? . . . But afterward, at school. You children never knew old Professor Chalybeas, did you? Chalybeas means iron, Fiete. Many a time he'd say to us, 'There's no gumption in you Ditmarshers,' he'd say. But when he came to talk about me, Fiete, he's say,

'Oh, there's gumption enough in Thiess Thiessen. It's all dormant, though.' Well, to make a long matter short, children, it wouldn't do at all. I tell you, people have got quite a wrong idea about book-learning and all that. They think it's a — what shall I call it? — a kind of road where the farther you go the more light you get. Nothing of the sort. Just the opposite, in fact. It seemed to me a kind of underground tunnel, a kind of fox's burrow. You go in like a ferret, but you don't know where you'll come out, or, indeed, whether you'll come out at all. So I beat a hasty retreat. 'It's so much less weight to carry,' as the fox said, when he left his hind leg in the trap and limped away on three feet. I got another document that time; I still have it. It's pretty well blank, I may say.

"There I was, then, back at Haze Farm again, and some days I used to stand in the kitchen doorway, and others I used to dream away under the east wall, planning voyages around the world and through strange lands; but my father had had enough of it. He took me by the back of the neck and put a flail in my hand, and set me by the side of our old farm-hand, Klaus Suhm, who was just setting about the threshing of the long oat sheaves that had grown in the moor paddock; and whenever I spoke of travels after that, my father held his clenched fist before my nose. That was the end of my plans for travel then, and I, a man who would fain have made a tour through Russia on foot to Bangkok by way of China, have sat here all my life on Haze Farm, and haven't yet seen Hamburg; I haven't even seen Rendsburg. I made up for it, as far as possible, with reading. I bought a big atlas and Fenimore Cooper's and Gertstäcker's novels, and all sorts of books on travel, and mapped out on the whitewashed walls of my bedroom all my imaginary voyages. You have seen it, haven't you, children, he?"

"Now just leave off talking, uncle!" said Elsbe, "and let's go over to the fox-hole."

"Oh, the fox-hole! Well, hurry up, children! we haven't much time, though. Trina must have dinner ready by this. There's dumplings and pig's-head."

In the embankment Thiess found the two fox-holes, half-hidden in the heather, burrowed into the yellowish sand.

"Shoot right into it," said Elsbe.

"That's throwing powder away, child!"

"It's all the same," she said, and looked at him angrily; "shoot into it, I tell you!"

Thiess Thiessen, I am sorry to say, had always to do what little Elsbe bade him. Twenty years before he had stood at the bidding of her mother in just the same fashion. So he put the muzzle of the gun into the hole. They all stood and watched the yellow sand, anxiously waiting for the shot. Lisbeth drew back a little. Jörn, who always kept an eye on her doings, teased her, ran over to her, seized her hands and tried to pull her back to the others. But she, thinking to divert him from his intention, laid her arms beggingly around his neck with a pretty little gesture, and kept quite still and held him fast. He didn't know what to do, feeling her bosom pressed so close to him. He laid his arms awkwardly about her and looked at her.

Often in the playground at school, when boys had caught hold of her, she had screamed and torn herself away in fear. He had never yet touched her in that way.

"When we're here with Thiess, you're always so different," she said, nodding her head at him; "at home you're often so grave and surly, but here you're in good spirits. I do like you, though, to-day."

She pressed close against him. He didn't use his whole strength by a long way; but he wondered that she had so much force in those delicate limbs of hers, and he was embarrassed at her approaches, and held her firm and gently, and said: "I am always going to call you Rain-tweet now!"

"Why?" she asked.

"Because you've such a high, tweety voice, like the bird we call Rain-tweet, you know — some people call it plover. That's the way you go, tweet-tweet."

They were still holding each other fast and smiling, when a titmouse on a neighboring tree suddenly began to whistle. It whistled with such a shrill, terrified note, that they all heard it and began searching for it. It was sitting on the topmost branch of a small fir, jerking its head up and down, and eyeing something on the ground. And when they looked in that direction they saw a brownish-yellow mass crouching in the dry, light-colored grass. Two burning eyes were gazing, with a look of infinite cunning, out of that three-cornered head upon the fox-hunters who were standing there open-mouthed. Thiess held the gun away from him with a stiff arm and his face

all pursed up, and fired wildly into the sand-hole. Fiete Cray pulled off one of his heavy iron-clamped boots and flung it after the fox with all his might.

"By Jove!" said Thiess, "that fellow had a mighty tail!"

Elsbe slapped her hands together. "And you say that now, uncle! But that's always the way when we're here; everything you lay hands to, goes wrong."

"Come, children," said he, "we'll be off! Dinner must be ready by this."

The house in which Thiess Thiessen had spent almost his whole life, and the head which Thiess Thiessen had on his shoulders, bore an undeniable likeness to each other. It must remain an open question for all time, which of the two had taken after the other, whether Thiess's head had in the course of years grown like the dear old house, or whether the house had taken after Thiess a little.

Thiess Thiessen's house was long and narrow; the high, dark thatch roof hung deep down over the little blinking windows; in front there was a small audacious kind of gable. Thiess Thiessen's head was very long and narrow, and the long, dark hair hung deep down over his ears and forehead almost into his shining, blinking eyes. His nose was small, and though not exactly audacious looking, was at least a little perky — a delicate arched nose it was, in the middle of a little, weather-beaten, dried and wrinkled face.

Elsbe often used to say to him:

"Uncle, your face is just like your house."

"It can't very well be otherwise," he would answer. "We've been more than forty years together now, the old house and I, and have always been by ourselves."

They were all seated at the round table in the big room with the white tiles on the walls, the room where twenty years hence they were to spend a Christmas Eve of such sorrow and rejoicing.

"Children," Thiess said, "there's nothing to beat a walk on the heath, and then home to Dittmarsh, dumplings, and pig's-head; I tell you, it's the best thing in the world."

He laid the first piece on Elsbe's plate, nodding and smiling.

"That's only your idea," said Elsbe. "But Dominie Peters

knows better than that. He says the best thing in the world is love; and I believe it is, too."

Thiess Thiessen's fork remained poised in the air; his little eyes opened wide with astonishment, and his eyebrows vanished under his long front hair. He thought to himself: That's exactly what her mother used to say, when she was twelve; she, too, had her ideas about love. And love has cost her dear. . . . "Love?" said he. "Love of whom?"

Elsbe hadn't thought of anything definite. But, sharp as a needle, she at once answered, "The love of God."

He was quite nonplussed. "Yes! yes!" he said, rocking his head backwards and forwards, "I am afraid, Elsbe, you can't make much out of that. Love of God? How would you set about it? Do you think He's sitting here beside you?"

"The meaning's plain enough," said Elsbe. "We must love what's good. That's what it means."

"This pig's-head is good, Elsbe," he said, "I quite agree with you." As he spoke his eyes had an honest look in them, like small, clean, shiny windows in the morning sun.

"Jörn," he said, "tell us what *you* think about it. Fiete Cray has nothing to say, because pig's-heads and heath-brooms and old witches that throw stones are the only things that interest *him*. But you, Jörn, you're a brooder, a thinker. Yes, you're a brooder, Jörn. Not exactly, perhaps, to such an extent as the Indian fakirs who sit in a corner and gaze at their stomachs until they see all sorts of mad visions. Speak, Jörn."

"The best thing in the world is work," said Jörn.

Thiess let his fork sink, and looked uneasy.

"Jürgen Uhl!" he said, "that was the last thing I should have expected you to say. Work? . . . why, what does the second page of the Bible say? I mean after they had been driven out of paradise. What was the doom that overtook these two poor wretches like flashes of lightning? 'Thou shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy brow.' Is that a blessing, Jörn, or a curse? Work, Jörn, work is a curse. And you say it's the best thing in the world. I have all my life wished for nothing more ardently than that I had been born on the Pesander Islands, or on Surnaci, away in the Molucca Seas, where work is simply forbidden. Prohibited, Jörn! Because otherwise too many bananas would grow there. And I thank God every day that I've got Haze Farm, and that I can manage, so to speak,

to escape the curse; but of course when the hay-making is on and when we are baking turf, I have to lend a hand, too. And then you go talking about work being the best thing in the world."

They none of them had a word to say, now that he began quoting Scripture at them.

But presently Thiess Thiessen grew more venturesome, and left the firm soil for marshy ground. "Children," he said, "as long as I can remember, I have read the *Itzehoer News*. Do you know what makes me so curious every time that Peter Siemssen comes around the corner, and opens the door, and cries 'Paper'? Well, it's because I'm so anxious to see if there's less work being done, or if work is going to stop altogether, or if there's a chance of us getting rid of the curse of work once for all! That's what I'm curious about now."

"Oh!" said Jörn, laying his hand on the table, "that would be a nice state of affairs! But go on, though."

"Just think of all the inventions there's been. And every invention has made work less. Think of the spinning-jenny. I can still see my old mother, how she used to sit through the long winter days behind her spinning-wheel. And the threshing-machine, too. I tell you, Klaus Suhm and I have beaten the floor in with our flails. And it's no exaggeration to say that Klaus Suhm must have smashed at least a score of threshing-floors in his time. Now the machine comes along for a day, and thrashes and winnows the whole crop, and it's done with. And then railways and telegraphs. A few years ago it used to be, 'Where are my top-boots, Liza?' 'Put the horses in the cart, Patrick!' I tell you for a fact, work's growing less, children. Klaus Suhm used to get up at two in winter, and used to knock at my window at three. Where does that happen nowadays? But I can't help wondering sometimes; it's a real puzzle to me how it is that work doesn't grow less and less and die out altogether."

"Well, and what then?" said Jörn, bending forward. "Supposing it did grow less, what would you do in your spare time?"

"Every one could arrange about that as he pleased," said Thiess Thiessen; "for my part, I'd vote for a good long sleep, in the shade of a stack of turf."

"Oh, would you?" said Jörn; "and others," said he, "others" — he hesitated and was a little embarrassed — "would

lie about all day in the public-house." He shook his head. "But you're too stupid for anything, Thiess. Do you think that Adam and Eve never used to work before the fall? 'They tilled the Garden of Eden,' it says in the Bible, and played with each other. We'd work, too, and have grand games together, wouldn't we, Lisbeth? But the fact is that many people are wicked and bad, and so we have all got to go to school, and later on to work. And as for you, Thiess, you ought to go right away and put the bay gelding into another paddock. Up there by the pines there's no grass left for him."

This conversation had been above little Lisbeth. While it was going on she had kept tapping Jörn's shoulder with the tips of her fingers. "See his eyes!" she said, "how foxy they look, and his hair's all standing on end like the quills on a porcupine!" And she came running up to him from behind and laid her head close to his. And her hair matched his for fairness.

"Come," said Elsbe, "just be quiet, uncle; I've had quite enough of your speechifying."

"It always does me good when you children come, Fiete. It's like getting a push from behind. We really must go and bring the gelding down from the pine paddock. But first of all I must show you what a splendid journey I've been making these last few weeks."

They followed him to his bedroom, a big, bare room with whitewashed walls, in which there was nothing but Thiess Thiessen's bed, a clothes-chest, and a couple of chairs. The walls were covered with heavy lines in blue pencil, representing the five continents and the two hemispheres. A pile of books lay upon the chairs. It was here that Thiess Thiessen undertook his long voyages and stilled his yearning for strange lands. He told them how in the past week he had sat by many a bivouac-fire on a journey through Central Africa, along with Livingstone, and what trouble they'd had in getting dried goat's flesh to eat. He took up the book and read out to them a most thrilling passage, where the English missionary and explorer concludes a treaty of peace with a fierce and barbarous negro king.

But it was of no use. Elsbe's thoughts were off again. "If we stay here gabbling like this," she said, scornfully, "we won't get a thing done all day!"

They went out and brought the bay horse down into the

lower paddock. No sooner was that done than they were on tenterhooks to see Thiess's new boat.

"It's a fine boat, children. She's the best and biggest craft I've ever built." There she lay on the brownish moor-water, made fast with cables to the shore as though she were a three-decker; she bore, it must be confessed, a distant resemblance to a pig's trough, and you could smell the pitch that had been poured into her seams ten paces off. In the middle a mast soared aloft, flying a streamer of yellow silk that had been cut out of granny's shawl, and on the deck stood four cannon made of old rifle-barrels soldered together by the village smith, and with polished touch-holes.

It was simply splendid! And they all praised Thiess, and said that this time he'd really done something worth talking about. Jörn was overjoyed, and was for going on board immediately. Little Lisbeth was the only one to eye the gay, many-patched thing with distrust, craning her neck from a safe distance, and assuring them *she* wouldn't venture into it.

Jörn was going to catch hold of her once more, feeling as if he wanted to have her hands in his again, but she stepped back, and shook her head with such a grave and pretty gesture that he at once desisted. By this Thiess was again in high glee with himself. He wasn't going to let his glory be diminished in any way, and so he said he was going to make the first trip by himself. He stepped rather gingerly into the crazy vessel, and seated himself cautiously in the stern, so that his outstretched legs rested under the deck about midships.

Elsbe was perched on a willow stump that hung over the water, and began to poke fun at him. "What if you should tip over, uncle? There you'll hang, head downwards, and your feet will stick in the boat."

"No fear, not I!"

"I say, Thiess, she's all lopsided!"

"Thiess, you know what an unlucky beggar you are."

"Lopsided? There's nothing lopsided about her!" He searched in his waistcoat pocket, and laid three black-looking matches on the deck in front of him.

"Now, Thiess, don't be trying to show off! You're sure to come to grief if you do!"

Thiess raised himself a little from his seat. There was a sticky, glutinous sound. The children burst out laughing, cast-

ing roguish glances at each other. Fiete Cray, who clearly foresaw the approaching catastrophe, was bent double with laughter. "Thiess, you'll capsize as sure as a gun."

With two cautious thrusts Thiess pushed safely off from the bank into the darkish water. He laid the oar very deliberately down in front of him, and stretched out his hand for the matches. The boat gave a slight roll, as though inclined to settle down into a different position. Thiess tried to strike the matches on the main deck, but they would not light, and then, as was his wont, he raised his leg in order to awake the slumbering fire, in the correct and accustomed spot. The trough gave another roll. The match blazed up. To the touch-hole with it! Another roll.

"Children, this was the way we fought at Eckenförde on the 5th of April." There was a flash and a bang, and the boat lurched terribly as he tried to jerk himself out of the way of the muzzles. But the pitch held him fast. Another bang and a lurch, and in the midst of smoke and the smell of sulphur and powder the boat turned over, and Thiess Thiessen with it.

Jörn Uhl stood up to his knees in water watching the spot. Fiete Cray said, "It's still fizzling." Elsbe said, "What luck!" and Lisbeth ran away crying. For a moment there was not a sound; the moor, and all of them held their breath. Then the water began to boil and bubble and whirl. Out of the depths came a something, all slimy and black, like the back of an immense fish. Sputtering and groaning, and panting and coughing, it crept ashore on all fours.

Thiess tried to clear his eyes. He shook himself and stamped, and pitched his coat and boots aside, the children standing around him with big, anxious eyes. Fiete was rolling on the ground, screaming with laughter. Lisbeth, who had just stopped in her fright, ran still farther off.

"Well, well," said Thiess, spluttering, "this is a thing that happens to the best of ships: a capsize under normal conditions with the whole crew providentially saved. Besides, she was built on quite a new plan, Jörn. She must have been a bit narrow in the beam, though. Well, at any rate, we've seen and experienced and learnt something fresh to-day."

"I'd like to know what *you've* seen!" said Elsbe.

He looked toward the water where the boat lay floating like a great turtle.

"You're quite right there, Elsbe," he said, still spitting. "It's frightful down below there. Everything quite dark, and I lost my bearings completely. I had to think pretty hard before I found which was the way to the top, I can tell you. You must bear in mind that I had all four elements to contend with, first fire, sulphur, and pitch, and then earth and water. All these were present in too great abundance. And, lastly, air, and of that there wasn't enough. Otherwise, of course, I wouldn't have come up so quickly, for you can't imagine what strange contortions I had to go through down below in order to get free from the boat." And thereupon he spat once more, and went home to change his clothes. When he had disappeared through the kitchen door, Jörn said, "It's always the same, whenever we come, something funny's sure to happen." Then he caught up with Lisbeth, seized her by the hand, and talked about all sorts of amusing things, till he made her laugh again.

But she still felt afraid, and wanted to go home, so he took her back to the others, and told them.

"That's always the way," said Elsbe, "Lisbeth always wants to go home too early."

"She mustn't come with us any more," said Fiete. "I'm always telling you that. She's too little and too prim. But you will always bring her." Lisbeth stood by Jörn's side crying.

"I'm going home with her," said Jörn, "straight away. You others can do as you like."

But they made up their minds that they would rather all go back together. So they waited till Thiess returned, and he escorted them through the wood to the edge of the heath. For a long time he stood gazing after them, shading his eyes with his hand, till at last the setting sun, whose light had been softened by clouds and mist, came out and dazzled his eyes. The children no longer turned to look back at him; in silence they hurried on over the heath, toward Ringelshörn.

CHAPTER V.

KLAUS UHL was in the habit of prating to every one about his youngest boy. His boy was to be a scholar, he said. "Jörn shall go to the University; faith, and that's the end of it." And when he was half-tipsy and in his best vein and beginning to brag, the old grand ideas about Jörn's future would return to his mind. "He shall be Provost some day," he'd say; and the farmers and dealers sitting with him at the table would laugh and exclaim: "He'll turn out a grand fellow like Provost Lornsen von Sylt. That's the sort of man he must be! Provost! Here's to the health of Jörn Uhl, the Provost."

All this had been repeated many a time, and it had become a matter of honor with Klaus Uhl. But although he often met teachers from the High School at the inn in town, he never asked them for counsel or direction. For his conscience failed him. He feared to hear that a clever, shrewd head was wanted for such a life, and that the lad would have to go to school at once; and he feared lest there should be other unpleasant questions to solve. He didn't want to be disturbed in his loose living and easy-going ways. Only on one occasion, and even then in the most casual fashion, did he mention the matter to Dominie Peters, with the characteristic indifference of the peasant. And when the latter offered to give the lad a little extra teaching and prepare him for the High School, the offer was accepted, and Klaus Uhl was glad that for the present he was relieved of this unpleasant responsibility.

So we find Jörn Uhl, with his short-cropped, stiff, fair hair, sitting by old Dominie Peters on the sofa. His deep-set eyes peered like foxes from their holes into the English book in front of him, eagerly devouring the wisdom they found there. For it was Dominie Peters's creed that an acquaintance with English is the stepping-stone to all knowledge and to every high distinction in life. Sometimes, when they had a few moments to

spare, they would do a little Latin, but this practice was soon discontinued.

It was a beautiful summer's day. The village street lay silent in the white sunlight, shimmering with heat between the lines of green trees. The lindens along the footpath cast their shadows upon the windows. The room was full of a quiet dark-reddish light.

"Jürgen," said the old man, "I must just pop out and see what the bees are up to. Go on translating by yourself a little, laddie; I'll be back in a minute."

So Jürgen went on with his translating awhile. A bee came in through the open window, buzzed about the room, saw that it had made a mistake, buzzed more and more angrily, till at last it found the window and flew out again, taking the boy's thoughts with it. Lost in day-dreams he gazed into the green shadow and air of the garden. Jörn was now at a time of life when the wonder of the world filled him with its mystery and aroused an intense spirit of curiosity in his mind. His love of books increased, especially of such as give a clear, firm conception of things, and later on he took to those, too, that soberly and demurely speculate upon life and its problems. He used to say to Fiete in those days, "I want to understand the whole world." And in the course of his life he really came to understand a good deal of it. Fiete Cray used to reply, "For my part, I'll be content when I have twenty thousand pounds, then I'll buy the Uhl for myself and live there till I die." And now they were both trying to realize their dreams. Fiete Cray, who had been confirmed, and was in service at the Uhl as stable-boy, pulled hair out of the horses' tails in the stable and sold it for good money; he carried on a small trade besides on his own account in currycombs and whip-lashes. Jürgen Uhl, however, pored over his English book and wondered mightily how human beings could speak such a queer tongue.

The windows were wide open. Birds were singing in the lindens, and bees were humming in the golden, shadowy air between the lindens and the window. Light steps were heard, as of some one walking on tiptoe along by the house wall, and Lisbeth Junker's fair, flaxen head appeared above the window-sill.

"Is that where you are?" she said. "Come out here."

"What are you doing, Lisbeth? Fishing?"

"I've caught ten big, fat fellows already. They've just bitten the worm off. Do come! Grandfather has forgotten you long ago."

"What a look your hair has!" says he.

"What? Is it rough?" She wondered at his finding fault with her, but suddenly she understood his meaning. "Oh, you mean with the sunlight on it." She turned her head around quickly. "Do you see, Jörn? There's a little sunbeam coming through the linden and making straight for my head as if it wants to shoot me. Do you see? But it's pretty rough, too. I can see it in the window. I've scrambled through the hedge three times this afternoon."

"I'd have thought you'd been scrambling through the sun."

"You needn't mind coming out, Jörn. You'll easily learn that little bit another time. It can't be as difficult as all that to become Provost."

So he left his book and went out to her. He was always happy to do her bidding, and could refuse her nothing, for she seemed to him so refined and ladylike and cleverness itself. In his dealings with her he was gentle and considerate, as every good and sensible man is when he has a comrade he feels to be better than himself. He was so anxious lest he should displease her, that he had never again ventured to call her "Raintweet," although it struck him over and over again as something peculiarly sweet about her that she had such a full, clear voice. It sounded like pure silver to him. A rather loud and vulgar tone prevailed at that time among the village children, and in his father's house he heard much that was rude and coarse. It was specially fortunate for him that he was brought into contact with this child in those critical years of his life. For she awakened and strengthened everything that was good and fine in him.

They crept through the fence and down to the pond. Now that he was thirteen, he was properly too old to go fishing for sticklebacks, but she took things as such a matter of course that he could never say no. And he was always happy, too, when he did anything that gave her pleasure. And everything that gave her pleasure and everything that she asked of him, he could do with a good conscience. Although she sometimes wanted things that required a slight sacrifice of his boyish dignity, her requests were never at all silly, which could not be said of Elsbe's.

They were sitting side by side in the grass under a bush, talking softly together. She was asking him about Elsbe and Fiete.

"What is Fiete going to be, Jörn? will he be a hawker like his father and the other Crays?"

"No, he doesn't want to."

"What, then?"

"Oh, sometimes he thinks of going to the California diggings, and sometimes he thinks he'd like to be coachman to the Provost, I think."

"You mean *your* coachman. He had much better do that than go gold-digging. . . . It's frightfully hot to-day."

For a long time they were silent. The sun shone and the birds sang, and gradually, gradually, her rod slipped deeper and deeper into the water, her head nodded and sank on to his shoulder, overpowered with coming sleep.

It seemed as though a spell of enchantment was over everything. As though those were not real houses whose walls and doorways peeped out here and there between the lindens, as though they were not real lindens at all, with their deep shadowy green and silent leaves, but as if houses and trees and the surface of the pond, and the children with their rods along its banks, all belonged to some wonderful painting where one ought to keep as still as a mouse. For it is not customary for people to move about in a picture. And it was all clearly and finely and most lovingly painted, with a touch of plain, rustic honesty and rough, hearty fruitfulness in it, and it hung in God's best chamber.

The fishing-rod lay deep in the water, and the maiden rested upon his shoulder, and the boy gazed with thoughtful eyes far into the picture of which he himself was a part, and felt her hair upon his cheek and her light, beautiful breathing, and did not stir.

From far off a light vehicle was approaching along the village street, and stopped in front of the schoolhouse. The slumbering maiden was wakened by it. Dominie Peters came hurrying from somewhere among the trees in the garden and went up wonderingly to a gray-haired, bent old man who was already standing in the gateway, and said:

"Will you come inside, sir?"

"I think we might remain in the garden," said the Provost, "and walk up and down a little. I have a message for you

from my wife. She would like some more of the winter apples that we had from you last year."

They talked awhile about this matter, then the visitor suddenly changed his chatty tone and said, in a low, grave voice, "But my coming has another object. I have known you now for many years, and can rely on your judgment of people and things. You judge discreetly, like a man who is by nature of a sober and quiet disposition, and who, pursuing his vocation in contact with the people, has gathered a great deal of experience and a little property in the course of years." He smiled softly. "The latter I take to be a fact of some importance," said he. "I wouldn't care about having the advice of a man in economic affairs, who has not himself a small stock of self-condensed diligence, *i. e.* money out at interest. I would like to ask you about the marsh-farmers here — I mean the Uhls."

The old schoolmaster, a little excited by the honor done him, and delighted at the chance of being able to do a good work, gave his information in a reserved voice. "Klaus Uhl is the worst of them. He sets an example which corrupts many of the others. In spite of a benevolent and peaceable nature, he is a fool out of sheer arrogance. The children on the playground imitate his way of looking the people of the poorer families up and down. 'Don't act the grand like Klaus Uhl,' they say, when any one's proud. And it's said that he always pays poor folk their wages out of his waistcoat pocket, even when it's hundreds of marks."

So the two men walked up and down the garden path, continuing their talk.

"What can the farms produce, then, if the owners live in such a fashion? Everything is only half-done. The servants sleep and dawdle away their time, the animals are neglected, and the soil becomes impoverished. But the worst of it is that the children, who are growing up, witness the dissolute life of their parents, and take this slovenly management to be the proper state of affairs, and rush into poverty as hungry calves rush against a wall."

"And the women, what about them?"

"There are some who urge their husbands, as soon as he gets a little tired of it, to return to his wild life, and take part in it themselves. There is one woman, mother of eight children, who told me without a blush that seven times, night after night

last week, she was at parties until daybreak; and I know another who drove through the farmyard and had her six-year-old child lifted up into the cart to her, saying in the presence of the farm-hand, veiling her braggadocio under the form of regrets, 'I haven't seen the poor little brat for eight days. In the morning when I get up he's already off to school, and of an evening when he comes home his mother has flown away again. What's one to do, though? One invitation after another!' As you well know, sir, when women once give way to foolishness, their foolishness knows no bounds. Of course there are other women, too, who sit at home, silent and worried, doing their work and looking after the farm, full of forebodings for the future."

"There's one thing more I want you to tell me! Unfortunately I can't prevent a man from bringing himself and his family to misery. But I've learned from private information that several investors or agents, of doubtful reputation, have been attracted by the ill odor of this parish, and are here trying to decoy our people into 'Ultimo gambling.'"

The old schoolmaster looked thoughtfully on the ground. "I recollect now that Klaus Uhl at our last savings-bank meeting had a conversation with Karsten Rieved1 about a number of different kinds of scrip, and that the word ultimo was mentioned. What is this 'ultimo,' Provost?"

"Well! when a farmer begins speculating, he soon loses his money, doesn't he?"

"Yes, invariably! Jochen Mill lost one hundred and fifty thousand marks in three weeks."

"There you are! And the point is that when a man plays Ultimo he can afterward say quite exactly *when* he lost his money, that's the only difference. But what's that you said about Jochen Mill? In three weeks, did you say?"

"Yes. He sold his farm and went to Hamburg. In three years he said he would be ten times richer than he was already. He fell an easy prey to them. All the sharks that infest the exchange after one single stupid peasant! They used to stand outside in crowds waiting for him, and help him down from his horse, for he was far too grand to go on foot. Every time he came, it's said, there was quite a fuss made over him. Some overdid it, taking off their coats and offering to lay them on the steps, so that his feet shouldn't touch the earth as he entered the hall. But he didn't see through all this mockery.

He thought only of 'the honor! — the honor of it!' At the end of eight weeks he was without a penny. His relatives bought him a small public-house near Hamburg, where he now sells 'half and half,' as they call it."

"Come," said the Provost, "now we will go into the orchard and feast our eyes for awhile."

"There's not much to see this year, sir; the codlin-moth has made great ravages among the apples."

"Well, well! . . . And yet it soothes one to get away from them and their mistakes and come into contact with Nature; to see how bravely and unostentatiously she undergoes misfortune and fights against it, just like some honest, energetic soul who fights his way manfully through life up to the very last."

They went down into the orchard.

"Well," said Jörn, as he laid the rod aside, "it's time for me to go in now and finish my lessons. There's a fearfully difficult bit in that piece of English." He forced his way back through the bushes, went into the room, and opened his book again. Soon afterward the carriage drove away, and the old schoolmaster came in again.

"What! are you still here, Jörn? Have you been here all the time at the open window? Did you hear us talking?"

"No, I've been sitting with Lisbeth."

"Where, then?"

"Down by the pond. We've been fishing for sticklebacks."

"Oh, that's what you've been doing!"

He walked up and down, looked out of the window and came back again.

"Jörn, do you know what? A lad must be able to hold his tongue else he'll never make a man."

"I know how to hold my tongue, too, if need be," said Jörn Uhl, staring with hard eyes into space.

"And, Jörn, . . . since it just occurs to me I'll tell you something. It can do you no harm to hear it. When I was a boy, old people who've been sleeping in their graves this many a year have told me how your great-grandfather used to leap over the ditches with a great ditch-pole he had, and come straight across the fields to church. He was a tall, gaunt man with bent shoulders, and used to wear a high black hat, as was the custom in those days. He was the Jörn Uhl who entertained the then

King of Prussia for two days as his guest. Have you ever heard the story?"

"Yes, I have heard about it from Wieten."

"Not from your father? Did your father never speak of it? Well, the king and Jörn Uhl stayed up half the night discussing the state of the district, and Jörn Uhl is said to have made use of some very hard expressions. 'Sirrah,' said the king, 'you forget that you are speaking with your sovereign.' Jörn Uhl, however, answered in a loud voice, 'If you were a true sovereign you would uncloak all such frauds and not suffer such worthless fellows to be in your service.' The king defended himself, saying, 'The kingdom is too big, Uhl, I can't look after everything.' But the old man replied, 'The summer dikes are big, too, and yet I know every drift and channel of them, and every ox that grazes on them.' In short, next day there was an inspection of the Civil Service arrangements of the district, and three officials, who had used their office for their own ends and grown wealthy, were hunted out in dire disgrace. Your great-grandfather was given supervision of the matter. It was on the occasion of this visit, too, that he persuaded the king to undertake the construction of new dikes, and advanced him thirty thousand thalers. For his Majesty had no money of his own for the purpose. That all happened exactly as I've told you, Jörn.

"After a few years, this hard-working, good king died, and the next that came to the helm didn't take his duties as ruler nearly so seriously. The state fell behind, and to make matters worse a long war ensued. Thus it came about that your great-grandfather got no interest on his money, and soon remarked, for he was a shrewd, level-headed man, that his capital was also in danger. So he quickly made up his mind, and set out for the city where the king lived.

"Now what follows I am not quite clear about: I can only tell you the story as the old people here used to tell it to me. Your great-grandfather — his hair was already quite white with age — goes to the king's castle and asks to see the king. The servant looked at him rather disparagingly, and told him the king wasn't to be seen; but he replied that his name was Jörn Uhl of Wentorf, and demanded that he should be announced. But the servant still showing no signs of haste, the old man gave a few tremendous puffs from his meerschaum pipe, and

lifted his stick, and at last found himself before the door of the king's chamber, and was announced to his Majesty. While he was putting his pipe and stick away in a corner and preparing to enter, he saw the king coming toward him, dressed in a new-fangled thing called a dressing-gown, and holding the big shiny star of some order in his hand and smiling benignly. In a trice Jörn Uhl had turned around and was gathering up his things from the corner. But when the king followed him in spite of that, he held his pipe and stick up before him as if in self-defence, crying, 'It's my money, not decorations, that I want,' and made off down the stairs as fast as he could go. Then he went to the king's ministers. He lost a good deal of the money, for the whole state was bankrupt, but he didn't lose nearly as much as many another.

"His son, then, your grandfather. . . . H'm! . . . Well, a good-humored, kindly sort of man he was. But that's all you can say about him, Jörn. And it's not much, is it? It's a bad state of affairs when you can't say anything to a man's credit except that he was good-humored. His speech was soft enough and didn't go very deep, and the same could be said of his ploughing. I used to know him well.

"And then your father got the farm. . . . Well . . . your father . . ."

The lad suddenly raised his head and looked the old man straight in the face, as though to say: "I know well enough what you've got in mind. But I am not going to let you see that I believe it."

But the old man did not continue after seeing the boy's glance. He kept passing his fingers through his long gray beard, as though he were going to pull those venerable thickets away by the roots. At last, resuming the stiff, loud tone of the schoolmaster, he said: "What does the great poet Goethe, the herald of the century we are living in, say? 'All that a man inherits from his father must be earned afresh by him if he means to possess it.' . . . Now go home, Jörn. I must be off. I've got a savings-bank meeting to attend."

Early next morning, just after the stars had vanished from the blue-gray sky, the lad got up and went singing and whistling and banging doors through the whole house, and came into the

stables. Wieten was standing in the passage with the milk-pails in her hand.

"Laddie, what's come into your head?" she asked. "Why, it's not four o'clock yet."

He laughed, and said ingenuously that he didn't want to stay in bed, it was too hot for him. "Where's Fiete?" he asked.

"I've managed to get *him* to turn out," said she. "I've still power over him, at least."

He went whistling up and down the dairy, and then went back to Wieten Penn and asked where the milkmaids were.

"I am afraid, laddie, the hussies are still in bed. You're not going to go and wake them, are you?"

"You've got the management of the house, haven't you? Why don't you bid them get up?"

"That's easier said than done," said she. "They're on too intimate terms with Alick and Hinnerk, so they sleep it out a bit longer, and I can say nothing."

He went along the passage to the servants' quarters, and as he passed flung a few pieces of wood that were lying near the kitchen against the door of the girls' bedroom, and sang and whistled so that his fresh boyish voice rang through the early stillness of the house. He sang like a thrush that sings in the orchard when the day is young, proud of its song, and at the same time very shy.

Then he went out so as to pass along under the windows, and to his astonishment saw his brother Hans, who had been confirmed three years before, coming over the fields from toward the village. He went to meet him, his whole face beaming, and called gaily to his brother, "Hans, old chap, I thought you were still in bed. Have you been to the mill so early, or was it to the smith?"

His brother came up to him and struck him. "You young lout!" he said, with thick, drunken voice, striking him a blow on the chest and driving him into the stable. He tried to repeat the blow, but missed, and had to lean against a horse. It grew restive and began to stamp the ground. Fiete came running out from among the horses with the currycomb in his hand.

"What's going on here? You've been hitting Jörn. Don't touch him, I'd advise you, or I tell you the two of us will give you such a hammering that you won't be able to stand."

That afternoon, as the farmer was preparing to drive into

town as usual, Jörn offered to harness the horses and bring them around to the front door. He did his task quickly and correctly, and came smartly trotting around the corner of the house with the two spruce bays; then he jumped down and stood in front of the horses, holding the leader by the reins and tipping him on the nose now and again, and each time he did so he hummed the words, " Ultimo is madness."

Klaus Uhl, who was in the big room, said: " Do you hear the little sneak, Wieten? What's he got in his head now? " and he laughed.

" He's been singing all the morning," she said.

And he was still singing away, " Ultimo is madness."

" What are you singing there? " shouted Klaus Uhl.

" Oh! " he said, complacently, " the Provost was at Dominie Peters's house yesterday, and I chanced to hear him say, ' All who play Ultimo go bankrupt.' "

" Do they, really? " He got into the cart, laughing heartily. " I say, youngster," said he, " my advice to you is, then, never to play Ultimo."

Jörn burst into loud laughter and his father drove away. You still heard that hearty young laughter of his that welled forth so free and joyous. Although at this time he was growing so fast, and getting up early was such a difficult thing for him, he got Fiete Cray to wake him every morning, and went, as it were by chance, through kitchen, stables, and fields, becoming a sort of restless, wandering conscience for the others.

Once when two horse-dealers were standing in the stable, and, in the absence of his father, bargaining with Alick, the eldest son, he stood by and listened. One of the dealers said, " I say, my lad, just go to the yard and see if our horses are all right." And he went. Afterward the one said to the other, " Strange how the eyes of that youngster disturbed me. He looked at me as if I were a horse-thief." The other laughed. " It struck me, too, he held us with his glance. I had to keep looking at him. Just watch it, he's the only one of Klaus Uhl's boys that'll come to anything. He's a shrewd customer."

And another time, when the brothers were weighing out some loads of hay for a purchaser, he was again there, and at last pointed out a mistake in the weight. " He's getting too much," he said. The brothers, who were tipsy, and the purchaser, who had a shrewd relish for a joke, laughed; but when the latter

noticed that the lad was in earnest, he complained in a tone of offended dignity that he couldn't put up with such remarks, especially from a raw youngster; such a thing had never happened to him before. Then the brothers got into a rage, and hunted him from the barn with their hay-forks. He went into the fields and walked for hours and hours beside Fiete Cray, who was ploughing.

That autumn Elsbe and Lisbeth Junker had sewing lessons together, and a little French from old Grandmother Peters. She was a kindly old woman who, for more than forty years, had shared her husband's joys and sorrows, but in the matter of foreign languages the two had never been able to come to an understanding. In her youth the wife had learnt French and praised and taught this language. Her husband, however, had got on so far in English that he could read a not over-difficult book in that tongue, and then, besides, he had now and again a chance of speaking with English sailors. Each of the old people had tried to learn the other's language into the bargain, but had had to give it up. And so one might often see this kindly old couple, sitting each in a window nook, plodding away at French or English, and interrupting and teasing each other at times in Low German, each anathematizing the other's language and the people who spoke it.

Elsbe Uhl, who had cost her mother her life, was full of excessive vigor and jollity, as is often the case with people who, though born of tall, strong parents, have themselves remained short of stature. She was small for her eleven years, but she was full of sap and strength and lithe as a young ash. Her elder brothers took no notice of her whatever, but she was hand and glove with her brother Jürgen and Fiete Cray. Often when she was on her way from the village over the meadows of an afternoon, the two would stand by the stable door and look out for her. And she would raise her school-bag high above her head and wave with it, and sometimes, when the fancy took her, she would make a haughty face at them and turn her head aside, out of mischief. She called that the "side-face view," for Fiete had said she looked better from the side, especially from the left side, than she did from the front. The whole of her tiny person was in motion, her feet slipping and sliding, her dress beating against knees and hips, her arms swinging as though she was fighting her way through the high reeds instead of

through the blustering wind. And when she came to the plank over the ditch she would shout through the roar and swish of the wind in the trees, "Shall I walk nicely, or shall I jump it?"

"Jump it!" the boys shout back.

The kitchen window would fly open and Wieten would cry, "Don't let those stupid boys be leading you into mischief, Elsbe!"

"Does it worry you when I jump, Wieten?"

"No, not at all, God forbid! Do as you like," and she slams the window.

The books fly over first, then follows Elsbe with a short, swift run. She would jump it, but her knees would give way a little. Then she'd cry, "Wasn't that a fine jump, now?"

Fiete nodded with a sly wink, and sent Jörn away to the kitchen to fetch their supper. When he was gone he whistled softly to himself, gazing into space. "Do you know what, Elsbe, many a time I've carried you along this path in my arms, when you were *so* big."

"That's a lie, Fiete!"

"But if I tell you you've caught a nice old cold and have got both your feet soaking wet, there'll be no lie about that." She laughed. "Don't tell Wieten. Wait, I'll be back in a minute."

After awhile she returned. "I've got the stockings all right without her noticing it. I'll put them on here in a jiffy."

She went into an empty horse-stall, changed her stockings, and came out again. "Now keep your eyes open," she said. She took a wild run as she had done before at the ditch and leapt into his outstretched arms, hanging around his neck and dangling hands and feet, and shouting with laughter. And he held her fast.

"Lassie, little Whitey," he said, "you're just for all the world like a wild bee."

"Sst! let me go, Jörn's coming."

He quickly let go of her, and when Jörn came along the path with the slices of bread they looked as if nothing had happened.

It was a good thing for this lusty, lively girl that the first pride of nascent manhood awoke next year in her friend, Fiete Cray, and that he held the child, "little Whitey," as he called her, somewhat at a distance, and gave his heart to the maid that worked under Wieten in the kitchen, a spruce, red-cheeked

girl who was of the same age as himself, and returned his affection. He was a rogue, being a Cray, and didn't altogether break with little Elsbe.

About All Saints' Day, she one day came back from her sewing lesson, and found Fiete and Jörn in the stable.

"Dominie Peters, who pokes his nose into everything, was saying to-day that it was hard times for many people just now, because they have to pay interest that's due now. I'm just wondering whether any one'll come to us and bring father interest."

Jörn's eyes shyly scanned the faces of his companions. Fiete whistled.

A few minutes later, when they had finished their supper, a little, old man, quite straight and stiff, with short, iron-gray hair and a shrewd, clean-shaven face, came across the courtyard up to the trio, and asked whether the farmer was at home. Elsbe said that he had gone to the village and would soon be back.

"I want to see him," said the old man. The three looked at him, and as he seemed tired, Fiete said, good-humoredly, "Go inside for a little, till the master comes back."

The two children accompanied him across the hall and were about to show him into the parlor when Hinnerk and Hans came out of the kitchen.

"Who have you got there?" asked Hinnerk, and they looked at the stiff little man disdainfully. He had on a long blue coat of home-made stuff, such as people wear to-day on the Geest. His boots were gray with sand, and he had his supper tied up in a red-checked handkerchief.

The children said that the man wanted to see their father.

"Well," said the two elder ones, "that's no reason why you should take him into the good room. Let him go into Fiete Cray's little room."

The old man went with the two children into the servants' room, sat down there, and asked, in a kindly tone, "Are you Klaus Uhl's two youngest children?" "Yes," said Elsbe; "I'm twelve and Jörn's fourteen."

"You're kind children," he said; "your brothers judged by my coat, and saw that I'm a Geester. I always fetch my supper with me from home, then I don't need to go to the inn and squander money."

Jörn said, with great earnestness, " We two, Elsbe and I, are always quite homely, and don't intend ever to go to the inn."

" But when there's a ball we will," said Elsbe.

" I never shall," said Jörn; " not as long as I live."

" That's right," said the old man, smiling, " then you won't need to live in poverty in your old age, and you can live in peace on your interest."

Jörn became suddenly silent, turned around and left the room. He ran like a hunted hare across the hall, and knocked against his father, who had just come home with flushed and jovial face.

" There's a little man from the Geest here who wants to speak to you. He's in the servants' room."

" What? In the servants' room? " He crossed the hall hastily toward the room. As Hans got in his way he gave him a cuff on the ear that sent him staggering against the wall; then he stepped into the little room. It was years since he had been there: for what did his servants or what Fiete Cray concern him? There sat the old man, and Elsbe was standing close in front of him, and they were just telling each other stories about Thiess Thiessen, whom they both knew well.

" Get out of this! " said Klaus Uhl. " I'm sorry, Martens, that these stupid youngsters should have brought you in here."

The old man waved his hand as if to say it didn't matter.

" I haven't come here in order to be made a fuss over, but to give you notice that I'm going to call in my eighty thousand marks. My daughter's going to get married."

Jürgen had run back across the hall and come into the kitchen, and was standing near Wieten, who was about to wash up. He had caught hold of her apron as little children are wont to do, till at last she said, " Laddie, what are you thinking about? Run away from here." But he looked at her in such a way that she said no more, but stroked his fair hair and said, " Yes, it's a good thing, laddie, that your mother's no longer alive."

She said this or something like it every time anything unusual happened in the house. He didn't quite understand it, but he felt that his mother was opposed to the spirit that prevailed in the house, and although it gave no distinct picture of his mother, and he himself was but scantily endowed with

imagination, it distinctly seemed to him as though his mother passed through the house with dead face full of grief.

He pictured her to himself big and tall, while she was in reality short and rather stout, just as Elsbe was later on.

This evening when his father returned to the Uhl, earlier than usual but also more tipsy, Jürgen met him in the hall in his shirt-sleeves, with a hay-fork in his hand, — he had just come from the stables, — and said, in a faltering voice, " Father, if we have so many debts, I suppose we'll soon have to sell the farm," and burst out crying. But his father struck him and drove him away. He ran into the servants' bedroom, and slept there with Fiete Cray.

From this day forward he went away by himself whenever he heard his father's careless laugh. And when he didn't know where else to go to, he would creep into the barns and into the gardens which lay near the big paddock; and they found him sometimes poring over his English book or the school reading-book, leaning up against some corner, or sitting on a tree or a beam. He persuaded Wieten to let him continue to sleep in Fiete Cray's room, which looked out on the apple-orchard.

In that room he dwelt for the next eleven years, that is to say, till his marriage, not counting the two years which he served as a soldier, and the year that he was in the field fighting against the French.

CHAPTER VI.

NEAR the foals' stall, not far from the stable door, there stood a big old-fashioned chest that was now in use as a chaff-bin. It was made of oak, and the front was ornamented with designs, carved in a strangely noble and simple style, representing scenes from the life of the Prodigal Son. On the left the youth, richly clad and with a heavy purse in his hand, is in the act of taking leave of his father, who stands in the doorway; on the right, he is returning home clad in rags and tatters. Above these scenes, and divided into two parts by the iron lock-plate, stood the words, "The blessing of the Lord maketh rich without labor." And below them, "Klawes Uhl: 1624."

Three hundred years ago, this chest had been the proudest and most highly prized piece of furniture in Klawes Uhl's household. But times had grown better and taste worse. It had had so many coats of paint, one on top of the other, that the delicate finish and expression of the figures had gradually become blurred and lost. At last it had fallen completely into disrepute, and had been turned into a feed-box. In this humble capacity it was never repainted, and, little by little, the thick layer of color had come off till the solid wood became visible again. Nobody, however, had any idea of its worth.

If only this old chest had been able to speak! It must have had a heart, for it had lived so long among men and had seen so much of the world. But, alas! it had no mouth! It was on this box that the Wentorf children used to sit, forging mighty plans for their future careers, during the two years Fiete Cray spent in service at the Uhl after his confirmation. Their voices and laughter rang through the stables clear as the strokes of the smith's hammer on the anvil.

"Fiete, come here," cried Elsbe, "here's Jörn with the supper." Jörn laid his book on the chest, and, after putting the pile of bread beside it, sat down himself. Elsbe was perched

up there already, dangling her feet impatiently. Fiete put his stable-bucket away and came with a bound and seated himself beside them.

"All right!" he said, using an English expression that he had picked up somewhere.

"Well, that's all settled, then," said Jörn. "If I leave home now, you're to stay here and look after things on the farm, else I'd have to give up all idea of being Provost."

"Yes, yes," said Fiete Cray, in deep, masculine tones, and with the greatest deliberation; "it has been a hard job for me to make up my mind, but I'll promise to do it. I'll stay. When I was young, why, I dare say I had all sorts of schemes in my head, and was particularly keen on California, for instance; but we get wiser as we grow older. So I'm going to stay here."

"Yes, you'll have to stay on here as stableman for a year or so," said Jörn, "and by that time your father will be getting pretty old. Then you'll go and live at home and choose a wife for yourself, and come over here every day to work, and manage the whole estate for us. It won't do for you to go about selling brushes and brooms as your father does. You must just give up your whole time to the farm and only work for us. Have you made up your mind about a wife yet?"

"Oh, there's no hurry about that! There's women-folk enough in the world."

They munched their bread in silence for awhile, drinking the fresh buttermilk by turns out of the big brown dish that stood between them.

"It's not so sure yet, Jörn, whether they'll accept you at the school; you have to know such a lot before they'll take you," said Elsbe.

"Oh! I'll manage that all right," said Jörn, with a determined look. "I can't tell you how I'm looking forward to it. I don't want to be a farmer at any price. But I wouldn't mind working at books forever and ever. There's only the one great drawback, the thought that things may not be going right here, and that's why Fiete must stay."

Fiete wiped his mouth, and set the empty bowl down emphatically on the chest.

"You can go and be made Provost without the least fear; I'll stay here and look after the whole business for you. Make your mind easy on that score."

Jörn took up his books and walked away into the garden, deep in thought.

"Now we're by ourselves, Fiete," said Elsbe, "and what do you think! I've seen Harro Heinsen. He's still in the third class. He hasn't been put up, so he says he won't go to school any more. We walked a bit of the way together, and you can't think what a lot of things he told me. He knows a thing or two, I can tell you."

"Don't you have too much to do with him," said Fiete, "you know how things stand between you and me? Don't you?"

"Oh, yes, of course I do."

"Don't you believe it'll ever come to anything, then. See, Jörn will be Provost, and will be out of our way. Alick's soon going to get married, and then he'll live on some other farm. Hinnerk is a soldier already, and next year Hans will have to put on the red coat and join his regiment, and everybody says, besides, that when the old king dies, there'll be war. Then it's safe to reckon that one of them will be shot, and the other will be sure to start farming somewhere else. And just tell me who'll be left then, little Whitey? Who'll be left, eh? Only you, not another soul. By that time I'll be overseer on the Uhl, and your father will be old, and he'll say to us: 'Children, you must marry, so that I may have peace in my old age.' That's my plan, and it'll come true, you'll see."

She nodded absent-mindedly, and began talking about Harro Heinsen again.

"His sister's engaged already, and she's only eighteen. When I'm six years older, I want to be engaged, too; if you're not ready to marry me by then, I'll take some one else."

"Don't go listening to all the yarns that Harro Heinsen likes to tell you, Elsbe; he's a regular blockhead."

"Oh," she said, stretching her limbs and yawning, "I'd rather you'd talk to me about something interesting. Harro Heinsen always has such heaps of things to tell me, all about grown-up people and the things they do. Just fancy, Lischen Wiederhold danced at the ball on market-day, and she's not sixteen yet. When I'm old enough, I really believe I'll dance myself to death. I'll dance till I drop. When we're husband and wife, Fiete, you'll have to take me to every single dance."

"Of course I will," said Fiete Cray; "you needn't trouble yourself on that head."

"First we'll put the children to bed, and then we'll go it."

"My word! Won't we?"

She laughed and drummed with her feet against the old chest, rocking herself to and fro. "What a life of it we'll have," she said.

"Now, run away, little Whitey," said Fiete Cray. "I've got a lot to do yet. I'll have to look smart about my work so that I may soon be head-man here."

As soon as Elsbe had disappeared, he went, whistling softly to himself, into the chaff-room, which was lit by means of a small, high window. There he sought out a comfortable seat and thought to himself, "Little Elsbe shall be my wife, as true as I'm sitting here, but catch me staying here a single day after I've got her. I'll either start a big business or I'll take her and her money with me and go out into the world — to Hamburg, perhaps — and I'll buy an hotel or something like that for myself. When one's got money, everything's possible. The silly little lass! But she's not as bad as Jörn, for all that. A pretty notion, for me to have to work all the days of my life on the Uhl, here, as his man!"

He shook his head, got up and took down from the window-sill a thick, well-thumbed volume that some farm-hand or other had left behind, years ago, in the servants' room. He sat down again, in the soft chaff, and read what the book had to tell about storms and floods, and the ancient Germans, and the Black Death, and wars, and all sorts of supernatural occurrences. For it was a thorough-going, honest old book, and dealt with a multitude of questions. The cover had got lost, but the title-page still remained, and on it was written, "The Gnomon, by Klaus Harms."

The animals in the stables were now beginning to grow restive, and the calves were crying out for food. . . . Fiete Cray had laid his book aside, and was sitting, crouched in a heap, running his fingers through his light, red hair, turning over weighty thoughts in his mind, muttering to himself as he racked his brains to know how he might carry out one or another of his many deep-laid schemes.

Klaus Uhl spent most of his time at the inn, or at the houses of his boon companions, cracking jokes, talking politics, and playing cards.

The few hours he spent at home were passed in jesting, or in roaming restlessly over the homestead, and in a constant hankering after the scene of his carousings. He had taken no interest whatever in the education of his youngest son, and had no idea how he would fare in his entrance examination. He shunned the mere thought of it. For he dreaded nothing more than the fear of putting himself into a ridiculous position. He lived in such an atmosphere of self-deception that it gave him a shock when Jörn, one day, said to him: "Dominie Peters got a letter to-day to say that I'm to be examined the day after to-morrow. But the school doesn't begin till after Easter. Can I go with you to town the day after to-morrow, then?" Klaus Uhl looked very doubtful for a minute, but suddenly his face brightened up. "Do you know, youngster, what I've been thinking? I've been thinking that Thiess Thiessen might drive you in. He'll enjoy it immensely."

Two days afterward Thiess Thiessen drove up to the farm in his lumbering old cart. It had two seats in it. "Jörn," he said, "you must sit on the back seat, so that you can meditate a bit on the way. Have you got all your book-learning and that in shipshape order? We'll drive around by the sand-road, so that none of it may get spilt. I always go that way myself when I'm carting dry turf to market."

"Now's no time for talking nonsense," said Wieten, curtly; "when a man's fifty, it's high time he had some sense in his head."

Thiess said no more, but looked at his horses, whilst Jörn climbed up behind him on to the back seat and laid his books on one side of him, and on the other two pots of butter that Wieten handed up to him.

"It's a burning shame," said Wieten, "that his father himself doesn't go with the boy. I know well enough why he doesn't."

Jörn knew, too. He keenly felt the difficulty and seriousness of his whole position and the mortification it entailed. It seemed natural enough to him that his father, this grand man with his gay manners, should not wish to associate himself with him. Later on in life, when he was a man, he thought differently about his father's absence. Even when he was a man of forty, he blushed for his father, when he remembered this hour and its disgrace.

He sat, silent and dejected, just behind Thiess. Trina Kühl, Fiete Cray's sweetheart, was standing at the kitchen door, and the two dairymaids came out and laughed at Thiess. Looking at Jörn, they said to each other, "He'll get on right enough." They all liked him in spite of his stiff, taciturn way, admiring his love for books, and considering him something of a genius. Fiete Cray was standing at the stable door, brandishing a hay-fork in the air, and shouting, "Good luck to you!" Elsbe stood at the cart, laughing at the tall dark brown top-hat that Thiess was wearing, and saying: "Thiess, you do everything wrong. People only wear a hat like that to funerals."

"And in the Provost's honor, too, child. I tell you, in this hat I am the owner of the old original form of all the funeral hats in all the shops and cupboards between the Elbe and Kingsmead. Where other hats are round, this one's real circular, and where others are angular, this one's right-angular. My head's a trifle oblong, that's why I wear a piece of elastic under my chin."

"Now just stop," said Elsbe, "you're beginning with your bragging again."

"Yes," said Wieten, "you'd better be off, so that the hubbub may stop, and let us get back to work again. . . . Good luck to you, Jörn, laddie! I have a feeling as though to-day has something good in store for you. . . . But I don't know . . . there's something in it, though."

Just below Ringelshörn, as they were turning up to the soft sand-road, they saw Lisbeth Junker making a short cut across the heath from Ringelshörn, and waving to them. "Thiess, stop! stop for a moment, Thiess!"

"What's the matter, then, little Princess?"

"I only wanted to give Jörn something," she said. "It's nothing to do with you." She sprang daintily up on the step and pressed a big rosy apple into the pensive Jörn's hand. "That's the last apple in the whole house," she said; "I always get it, but this time you shall have it." She sprang quickly down again, and stepped away into the heath on the left, raising her hand threateningly, with a somewhat confused though roguish look. "Now, just wait till you're Provost, Jörn. . . . Oha! . . . Good-by, Thiess!"

They drove in a slow trot through the deep sand of the heath. It was by no means a triumphal procession. In front sat Thiess

gazing at the backs of the horses. In his shrewd little eyes, and in his little thin face beneath the tall, stiff undertaker's hat, beamed and smiled the sort of wisdom which says to sorrow, "I will softly laugh at you," and to joy, "I will softly weep over you;" the sort of wisdom which confesses that the life of man is a mystery not to be unravelled. "Stoop your head to the storm, little bird, but have no fear, for everything is in the hand of a great God." And behind sat Jörn in all the freshness of his youth, and in the midst of his riches, pots of butter to the left, and knowledge to the right, and looked as serious and meditative as though he were going to have this dark brown undertaker's hat in front of him till the very end of his life. Gradually the old church ahead of them got higher and higher, then came the wooden bridge over the Winderbergerau, and then came the multitudes of houses, ever so thick, with their pointed, bright red tile roofs.

The inn where the turf-farmers, with their home-made blue and gray coats, always put up, Thiess found closed for repairs; so they had to drive into the lower town, and came to an inn which only the wealthy marsh farmers frequented. The two of them had to wait a couple of weary hours in the big empty barroom. Jörn stood and looked out of the window; Thiess walked up and down, sipping now and then at a penn'orth of schnapps that he had ordered, and twice filled his pipe out of the tobacco-box which, according to an old custom, stood upon the counter for the free use of the guests. Then they went through the little, silent, winding streets to the High School.

It was Thiess's custom, out of sheer modesty, never to go into a house by the chief entrance, but always to find out some side door, that generally brought him into a kitchen or a stable. So on this occasion, too, he made a shy détour past the big school entrance with its staircase, and found a little side door, which fortunately brought him into the basement where the school-attendant had his rooms. This man was a cobbler, and was sitting at his bench, and in front of him stood his morning coffee, and the morning sun touched up his iron tools with its glimmer, and made the glass balls sparkle that hung from the ceiling, and gleamed on every grain of the fresh white sand with which the white boards of the little room were strewn. A pleasant fresh smell of pitch, leather, and coffee filled the room and rejoiced Thiess Thiessen's lonely soul.

"I have brought a recruit for you," he said, in a friendly tone. "Dominie Peters, master of the art of reckoning at Wentorf, has coached him. The English language he has already mastered, as well as his native German. Everything else that's necessary, the other foreign lingoes and style in general, he wants to learn here: for he's got the provostship in his eye."

The cobbler looked at Thiess over his spectacles, and said: "I'll take him up to the rector at once; they've already begun."

"Well, Jörn, laddie; I wish you good luck. You know what good things dumplings and pig's-head are, especially when you have a good serviceable suit for summer and winter, and a solid rain-proof roof over your head. Those are all good things, Jörn, and they'll all be yours as long as you live, if you become Provost."

The two went up-stairs, and Thiess shifted his chair into the sunlight, laid his hat carefully on his knees, and waited, hoping to have a pleasant crack with the cobbler. The latter soon returned, put his coffee aside, and began to work.

"Just tell me, Meister, how long does it take for a lad to get through the school course, till he's finished?"

"Hm! . . . It all depends whether he's got to begin low down in the school, or whether he can skip a few classes."

"I think," said Thiess, "he'll skip a few; for in the first place he's had two years' teaching with Dominie Peters, and in the second place he's the son of Klaus Uhl."

"Klaus Uhl of Wentorf?"

"Yes, him. The teachers will guess that he won't be particular as to a few glasses of grog and a few flitches of bacon. And I myself, though it's neither here nor there, won't mind bringing a load of good black turf in, now and again. My name's Thiess Thiessen. People generally call me 'Thiess behind the Haze.' What's your idea on the matter?"

"Well, you see, Thiessen, the thing's this way. Just lately when my cousin, the youngest son of my mother's brother . . . Her maiden name was Ehnerwölsen, she's from Wentorf, you know, one of the Crays of Suderdonn."

"I know," said Thiess, "old Heinrich Cray! His second wife was deaf of both ears and heard nothing that she didn't want to."

"Right, that's the one I mean. My cousin used to be a cobbler, but now he's a coachman. Well, there were four

cobblers at the christening. And how many of them, do you think, have stuck to the shoemaking?"

"Well?"

"Why, not one of the four. They gave it up, and took another trade, and every one o' them's doing well. . . . Now that's just the way with the High School. Of every five that enter, not more than one of them ever brings it to anything."

"Jörn Uhl will go through with it," said Thiess; "he sits all day up to his eyes in books, and neither hears nor sees a thing. He's got it into his head that he's going to be Provost." — There stood Jörn in the doorway, his long, narrow face a little pale and his fair hair standing straight up, as if every individual hair were anxious to see how astonished Thiess would look.

"It's all one to me, Thiess, whether I'm Provost or not. But I mean to learn something!"

In his amazement Thiess was holding his hat gripped with both hands, as though expecting some one to put a penny in it.

"Do you mean to say they can't teach you anything more here?" he cried. "Are you going straight away for the provostship?"

Jörn shook his head, so that the sunlight glittered in his hair. "It's all been wrong. I ought to have been learning *Latin* all this time. . . . How old are the boys in the lowest class?"

"You'll be the biggest of them," said the cobbler.

"Do you see, Thiess? The lankiest boy in the lowest class! That's what comes of it! He's been driving into town every day, but he's never once asked whether it was Latin or English I needed. But I'll be Provost in spite of it. I've told them up-stairs that I'm coming back after Easter."

"Jörn, laddie, what will Lisbeth say, and Fiete Cray, too?"

"It's all the same! It's all the same to me! I'm coming back after Easter, when school opens. I'll begin at the bottom and sit among the youngsters. Let's be off, Thiess."

Thiess stood up slowly, shaking his head.

"Jörn, laddie, it's a bad business; Elsbe will be saying again that everything I touch goes wrong, and your brothers will grin at us. But what's the good of talking? You can't make English into Latin. So come, Jörn."

They went down the street and entered the inn again. Thiess emptied the glass of schnapps that was still standing on the

counter. Then he filled his pipe, for the third time, from the tobacco-jar, put his tall hat on with great deliberation, and asked how much he owed. But the landlord, who was half-angry, half-amused at the small quantity of liquor and the large quantity of tobacco he had consumed, said, "You've smoked yourself free, Thiessen," and refused to accept any payment. So they drove back over the heath, scatheless, at least, as far as their pockets were concerned. But this time they sat close together, side by side. They had little to say, except that Jörn would now and then remark, "It's all the same, I'll do it yet."

As they turned around the bend out of the alder-lane and drove up to the farm, Elsbe came out of the kitchen door, her eyes all red with crying, weeping so violently that her breast and shoulders heaved with her sobs.

When Thiess Thiessen saw any one in misfortune he became excited, his eyes opened wide, and his arms and legs began to work. Least of all could he bear to see Elsbe shedding tears. "Come, tell me, little Whitey, what's the matter? Who's been ill-treating you?" But she couldn't speak for sobbing.

Presently Wieten came around the corner and said: "Just think, her father happened to go into the stable, and there he sees Elsbe and Fiete Cray, sitting arm in arm, on the feed-box, and the rascal was telling her how he'd marry her, and how he'd then become master at the Uhl. And while the lad was in the middle of his speech, Klaus Uhl caught him by the collar and gave him a thrashing and then flung him out of the stable door. Just at present he's sitting in his bedroom, gathering his odds and ends together, and Trina, the maid, is howling."

Jörn stared down at Wieten with open mouth.

"Will Fiete have to leave the farm now?"

"Of course he will," said Wieten, "and that at once, the impertinent young rascal. Where he gets hold of such notions, I can't think."

Just at this moment Fiete Cray came out of the stable door, his Sunday suit wrapped in a check cloth beneath his arm. "I got them from you," he said, bellowing; all manliness had forsaken him. "And now I must be turned off like this, with hardly a stitch on my back, and go to Hamburg, and I don't even know which direction the town lies in. You've always been telling me your stories about 'Hans in Luck' and about chests of gold and the brushmaker who became king."

Thiess had got out of the cart. "Come down, Jörn, what are you sitting up there for? Come, Elsbe, come; cheer up, little lass."

But she tore herself away and ran down the road after Fiete Cray, and caught hold of his arm, crying, "He sha'n't go away! I'm so fond of him! He sha'n't go away!"

But Fiete Cray pushed her away from him, and roared and whined. "You'll see, all of you. . . . I'll come back some day, and live on the Uhl in spite of you, I will! I'll start a big brush-binding factory there, and have it worked by steam!" The little bundle had slipped from his arm. He stooped and picked it up, and then went across the road into his father's house.

Wieten Klook was dumfounded at the youth's words. She clasped her hands together, turned around and went into her room and sat down to work, full of rage and shame. In many a twilight hour she had told these stories to wondering children, with hushed voice, as the wisdom of a world which, though hid from others, had been to her partially revealed. She had thought that these olden things were worthy of being repeated in order to fill the soul with fear and horror, love and joy. But this lad had made use of them as spade and cleaver-staff, and shouted them out in broad daylight across the farmyard. She let her sewing sink into her lap, and gazed vacantly at the table; and while she sat there so motionless, an invisible hand laid one picture after another before her, and the pictures spoke of travail and misery and death among the people she had once known; and each picture was sadder than the last. And then she saw Fiete Cray going out into the world, without guidance and full of these motley thoughts. Then she looked around her in the room, and when she saw that she was alone, she hid her face in her hands and quietly wept.

When it was dark, Fiete Cray came out of his father's house, his bundle with his work-day clothes under his arm. His mother sat behind the stove crying. "Fiete," she called after him, "you're only seventeen. It's too far for you to go." She thought of the other Crays who had flown away so far that they had never come home again, to America, and God alone knows what lands besides. She had been among the last pupils of old Stübel, who had had a certain reputation as a trousers-

cutter, but not as a teacher. And then she had always had a hard, stubborn head.

"Not if it were as far as the end of the world," answered Fiete Cray. "He struck me with his dog-whip, the miserable hound." He began to weep aloud again with rage, clenching his fist at the big old house, and shaking it at the high barns whose mighty straw roofs lay so dark and silent in the midst of the high poplars and ash-trees.

If Klaus Uhl had witnessed this weeping and rage, he would have burst into loud and hearty laughter, and would have pranked the story out a bit and told it with his own additions in all the inns of the neighborhood.

Jasper Cray had come with his son as far as the door. "It doesn't matter a straw where you go to," said he, "so you can't lose your way, and that's something in itself, — not to be able to lose one's way, — neither have you much of a bundle to carry; if need be you can cut straight across country, and that's another advantage. Look to it that you turn out a good man; if you go to the bad, don't show your face here again; but when you've done something for yourself in the world, then come back and see how we're getting on."

He was already on his way, and almost hidden in the dusk. "You can depend upon it, father, I'll come back again."

As he was turning around again to proceed on his journey, he saw Jörn Uhl standing in front of him.

"Thiess is waiting with his cart up there by the pines," Jörn said, in a low voice; "to-night you are to sleep at his place at the Haze."

They walked together along the foot of the hills, till they came to a little gully on the left, covered with heath and bracken. It led up steep between the two hills, and was broad and deep enough for a good-sized farmer's house to have stood in it. Toward the top it grew shallower and narrower, till it at last ran out on the Heidefeld.

Fiete Cray went on ahead, walking in silence, except for a sob from time to time that shook his whole body.

Half-way up the gully, hid between low oak-scrub, and not far from the narrow track which led to the top, lay a circular pond, not much bigger than a cart-wheel, and filled to the brim with fresh, clear water. That was the Goldsoot. A spring from somewhere in the hills above kept it always full, and the

overflow waters disappeared with much soft whispering and murmuring into the undergrowth below. Two or three stars that stood above it in the sky lay reflected there, and two or three leafless branches that hung over the edge were mirrored in it like sharp, slanting spears defending the entrance to the waters. A wind came up from the sea and passed away rustling through thickets, where the ground was covered with last year's crisp, dry leaves. There was a constant murmur as of soft voices below and above and around it on every side.

Fiete stood still, gazing meditatively at the water. "I should like to know," he said, his voice broken with an involuntary sob, "what the bottom's like, and what sort of a feel it has."

Jörn tried to comfort him, and said, by way of faint encouragement: "Won't you go and try the Steinberg by the Haze, that you were always telling us about? You said there were heaps of gold there, some of the pieces as big as children's heads."

Fiete Cray shook his head emphatically; for these children's heads were creations of his own fancy; he had considerably widened the field that Wieten had so diligently labored at many an evening in the lamplight, and he had done so with such increase delight in his inventions, and with such warmth of imagination, that often he could not tell how much of the story was due to Wieten and how much to his own fancy. But this night there was a sifting asunder of truth and fiction, and the lumps of gold as big as children's heads were classed among the fiction. Goldsoot, on the other hand, belonged to what was true.

He gazed into the water yet awhile; then he went on slowly up the hill. At the top, on the brink of the Heidefeld, he said to Jörn:

"Now, go back home. I want to walk on alone."

Then Jörn turned around and went away, without handshake or good-by, back over the heath.

Fiete Cray, however, remained standing up there in the dry heather. Jörn looked around after awhile, and saw him standing like a dark post against the horizon.

Fiete Cray turned slowly around and went down into the gully again; laying his bundle down near the water, and drawing off his coat, he stretched himself full length in the grass, and reached as deep as he could into the water. In this way he searched around the margin, but found nothing. He then un-

dressed hastily, and when he was stripped caught hold of some overhanging branches, and let himself cautiously into the cold water, and found bottom. It reached up to his breast. He stepped guardedly about, but felt no trace of anything hard. It was all soft sand and decayed leaves. Then he dived three times, and searched along the edges, but there was nothing there but the smooth clayey sides, overgrown with water-weeds.

Then he gave it up. He drew himself out of the water and remained standing awhile, before beginning to dress. He stood erect and motionless, feeling nothing of the cutting cold that was scourging him as with thin icy rods. He stood looking into the water, and the water looked back at him with a calm, sad eye, as though it sorrowfully held its secret fast.

Gossamer and spider-webs go flying all over the land, and thistledown and scent of flowers are carried into every neighbor's garden. And at times a shrewd and meditative eye may chance to see Fate, great and beautiful and terrible, sitting upon the everlasting stone, with head on hand and frowning brow, tracing in the sand that labyrinth of lines and confusion of paths that we mortals have then to tread. Fiete Cray had his adventure that April night, by the lonely Goldsoot, not for himself alone.

It happened about this time that there was a certain young girl in the village, a farmer's daughter. She was tall and good-looking, and much courted by the young folk thereabouts, but up to her twentieth year she had refused all their advances. Seldom was she seen at a dance; and when she went, it sometimes happened that she would leave the room, scowling, after the first dance, put her horse in the cart, and drive home alone through the darkness. Among the younger girls she had no close friends; she had, however, this winter, attached herself to a young, newly married woman, who had charmed her with her fresh and simple grace. She had come there with her husband, a stranger like herself, and purchased a house in the village, and was now expecting the birth of her first child. Sometimes she would come and sit with the young wife in the quiet hours of twilight; and one day she asked, with the greatest delicacy, how her friend could have brought herself to be a man's wife, and to give herself so entirely up to him. When the other, surprised and embarrassed by this question, could give no immediate reply, she said, with tears, that she had in

her heart an affection for some one, but that she could not conquer her disinclination to respond to his love. She had, she said, an invincible reticence in this matter; being a farmer's daughter, and having grown up in the country, she well knew what marriage entailed. The young wife comforted her with gentle, hesitating words, and tried to convince her that love, when it is real, causes everything painful to be forgotten. But in spite of this conversation no change took place in her demeanor when alone. She wept and bewailed her unhappy nature, which had made of her neither a nun nor a real woman, and which had caused her lover, and, through him, herself, to be so unhappy.

After some time had elapsed, it happened that on that very April evening when Fiete Cray left the Uhl, a ball was again being given in the town. It was just past new moon. For several days she had been low-spirited, but as she now felt herself quite well and fresh again, on the day before the ball she thought she would take advantage of this happy, almost gay, frame of mind, so as to banish her disinclination. She therefore made up her mind to drive in to the dance. She made up her mind to be friendly toward all who were there, to suppress her aversion to dancing, and to be particularly friendly to her lover if he happened to dance with her.

When she entered the room she at once saw him standing near the window. He seemed to have been waiting for her; his frank and honest eyes beamed with love as he looked at her. They both belonged to the better class of farmers, and both were naturally distinguished by a chaste and loyal soul. With a deep feeling of gladness she noted his bright, neat looks, and resolved afresh to show him that she was deeply attached to him.

But when the music began and a troop of young suitors hastened toward the row of maidens, and, beneath her lowered eyelids, she rather felt than saw that her lover was approaching, she conquered her feelings so far as to consent to dance with him. But when he spoke to her in the interval between the dances, he saw that her face was pale, her lips trembling, and her cold, haughty glance was fixed straight before her, so that her beautiful young face seemed as though suddenly frozen. Deeply hurt, he led her silently back to her seat; she left the room immediately afterward and drove home.

On the way, alone in her trap, in the far silence of Nature and the night, her face at first wore the same look as it had done in the ballroom. On both sides of the road there ran low embankments, and the flat fields of humble heath stretched out mile on mile. She was high above Nature. She sat upright in her seat, and showed by her imperious expression how proud she was that she alone of all these maidens possessed this high chastity.

While the vehicle was driving on so noiselessly through the deep sand away into the night, she suddenly heard a bird in the distance wailingly call to his mate. The approaching wheels must have frightened it out of its deep sleep. Immediately afterward there came from close at hand a comforting cry in response. Closely following each other the two birds flew whirring over the roadway, uttering a tender note.

As the girl turned her eyes from the birds back to the road, she seemed for the first time to notice how terribly desolate the landscape was, and the air seemed full of a dead, empty darkness.

Her solitariness, of which she had been so proud till now, made her shudder with fear. She felt how much easier it was to act like her sisters than to set her face against what Nature urged upon her, with such a smiling and anon such a grave and almost threatening mien. Giving herself up to this feeling, she bowed her head and began softly to weep. Her fall was deeper because her pride before had been so high. The image of her lover, which her previous haughtiness had robbed of every charm, had now, once more, those kindly, honest features. His noble nature, which found expression in his whole demeanor and in each dignified movement, now possessed her whole heart; and her heart cried aloud for him. With knitted brow she began to brood over what manner she should adopt to overcome her shyness toward him whom she loved so well. She turned over all sorts of strange plans in her mind as to how she could, so to say, outwit herself. At last she hit upon the idea of waiting in front of his gateway till the approach of dawn. His farm lay isolated enough for such a purpose. Nor was it impossible that he might return home soon after she had left the room, and then, when he came up, — he usually went on foot, — she would go to him in spite of herself and speak to him. She would ask him to forgive her for being so shy, and

tell him she loved him more than everything in the whole world. With this resolution she drove forward on her way, intending really to carry out her purpose.

But she had not gone far, whilst still trying to think out more clearly the position she would be in, before she remarked that her old spirit of defiance and aversion was again coming over her. She tried in vain to wrestle with it, and was on the point of entirely succumbing to it. The brightness in her beautiful eyes had already died out, when she suddenly came to that part of the road that overlooks the little gully, where, not twenty steps below her, the Goldsoot lay directly beneath her. There, in the half-light of the little valley, near the silvery disc of the water, she saw the white figure of a man. He was standing motionless, gazing into the water. In her fright she jerked the reins, thinking to rouse the fiery young mare with the accustomed call into a sharp trot. But her heart was in her throat and her voice failed her, and so the mare understood this mute jerk of the reins as an order to stand, and kept just as motionless as the gleaming figure of the youth by the mirror of the pool and as the panting maiden on her seat.

Then like a revelation there came over her the brave, enlightening thought that this apparition was not there by mere chance, but in order that she might be healed by a return to Nature. She saw the lithe, proud, strong frame, how as in some harmonious temple one part stood free and strong upon the other, rising to the knees, then growing broader in strong and youthful power to the hips, then strong and rushing, like a cry of delight, up to the breast and the head, which was bowed down in thought; and as she looked only for a moment, her inmost soul told her that here pure truth had her dwelling, here, where God and Nature are housed together in sweet, pure union. She felt that the man there was the comrade of her innermost being, with whom in giving and taking, each with his especial gifts, would round off his own incomplete nature to a nature full and whole. A feeling of deepest gladness streamed through her limbs. Her eyes filled with tears so that she saw nothing more. And noticing her tears, she could not help laughing softly to herself. The mare started on at the sound, and the youth by the pool started up in fear. But another, too, had heard the laughter — one who was walking along the road be-

hind the vehicle, and who had so far gone along with eyes fixed on the ground, for his thoughts were full of melancholy.

He heard the sound of laughter and immediately recognized it. He walked quicker, and soon caught up with the vehicle. "You are driving very slowly," he said.

She laughed again softly, and said, roguishly, "I wanted to drive slowly, so that you might catch up with me. Of course you had to put on your coat."

He did not pay any closer heed to her remark. He thought that as she had left the room she had seen him getting ready to fetch his overcoat; but he clearly heard from her voice that now at last her hour was come, and was more than rejoiced, and his heart laughed within him.

He laid his hand upon the railing of the cart and walked beside her, and said, "Why did you drive off so early?"

"Guess!" she said.

"I think it was so that we might meet here."

"If that's what you think, you're a clever fellow, and you mustn't keep on walking beside me any longer. Come, spring up."

She pulled in the mare and he unfastened the leather rug that was over her knees. But before jumping in, it occurred to him that it would be good for him to show a little pride. This was the opportune moment for such a thing, he considered, if he wanted to prevent her coy nature from afterward being dashed by the thought that her lover had never had dignity enough to check her for her frequently repulsive demeanor. So he said, very calmly and deliberately, as though speaking of a matter of course:

"I don't wish to see the face again that you showed me in the ballroom to-night. If you promise to be good, then I'll drive with you."

She nodded and smiled. "Get up into the cart," she said, "and you shall be treated as you deserve, dear friend." And she laid her hand on his shoulder.

With that he got up, and took the reins into his hands. She submitted, and leaned back in the cart, and said, "Drive slowly."

"Why?" he asked.

"Are you so shrewd, and yet don't know that much?"

"I know," said he, "it is so that we may be a long time together on our way."

And then he laid his arm around her and kissed her, and from that hour forth she was his good wife. He held the reins; and she told him when she wished that he should drive slower or faster.

The poor youth by the pool had hastily put on his clothes, and had quickly climbed up to the edge of the heath, where the vehicle with these two happy young lovers had just vanished into the dark. He turned once more and looked toward the village. The wide sand-downs, that his ancestors had hollowed out and under which they had lived, gleamed faint in the distance. He didn't turn again, but walked straight across the heath in the direction of the two oaks that stood, broad and squat, near the cross-ways. Under one of them stood Trina Kühl, the milkmaid. She had a bundle under her arm, like him, and in her black confirmation dress, that was now too short for her, was waiting for him. "Where have you been?" she said.

He didn't answer, but straightway asked, "Do you really and truly want to go with me?"

"Yes," she said, "why not? Klaus Uhl is charity officer, and so he either keeps my wages in his pocket, or puts them into the parish poor-box, because I grew up in the workhouse. And then they expect me to be grateful into the bargain. If you'll take me with you, Fiete, I'll go and look for a place for myself in Hamburg. But I don't know yet where it lies. I must pack my things a little better, though."

She knelt down, untied the bundle, and laid her working dress and the three chemises and the three pairs of stockings and a pair of leather slippers neatly together. Then they walked on side by side over the rise. The wind came driving up behind them, and sand and withered oak-leaves flew whirling around them.

On the other side of the rise, where it was sheltered from the wind, they found Thiess Thiessen's old cart waiting. Thiess had taken the winkers off the horses, and they were browsing along by the embankment below; their master was sitting, doubled up, on the high, comfortable seat, fast asleep.

"Thiess," said Fiete Cray, "wake up! Trina Kühl is here, too, and wants to go with me. Don't go talking to us about

things, Thiess; what's the use! Just wait till we get to Hamburg and see how we get on."

Some days after Easter, shortly before school recommenced, Hinnerk Uhl, who was the smartest of the brothers, and therefore his father's favorite, said:

"I say, father, that youngster, Jörn, talks the strangest stuff you can imagine. It seems he doesn't want to go to school, but thinks of staying here at home with us. It won't do at all for him to turn farmer, too. Where will you get farms for us all? You'll have to have a talk with him."

Jörn was summoned before his father, and at once said he wanted to stay at home and work. His father scolded and stormed, and at last struck him with the whip; but he could not alter him. Jörn did not say what were his reasons. But that evening, as he lay in bed in the little room which Fiete Cray had once shared with him, Wieten Klook came in to comfort him, and asked him to tell her what had made him change his mind, after having been so terribly eager for book-learning. At first she could not get a word out of him, so violently did he weep. But after awhile he unburdened his heart to her. It was what she had already divined: "There would have been no one," he sobbed, "who would have looked after the foals this week if he himself had not done it. And the groom would make all the horses wild and spoil them with kicking them, if he didn't go into the stable now and again. The bay cob had a wound on the knee already. Even Fiete Cray had often not looked after things properly, but after he had gone away, if he (Jörn) were to go away, too, everything would go to rack and ruin." When she tried to soothe him, and stroked his bristly hair, saying, "Now, it's all right, laddie; don't take on so about it, dearie," his weeping burst forth afresh, and between his sobs she heard, "Do you think . . . that I like . . . doing it, Wieten? . . . Now I can't learn anything at all. I'll never have time to take a book in my hand. And I'll be as stupid as all the rest."

Next morning, when he rose, Jörn Uhl put on the blue linen stable-jacket that Fiete Cray had thrown aside.

Thus it was that this whirlwind came upon the Wentorf children, tearing away the one that wanted to stay, and thrusting him out into the world; slamming the door in the face

of the one that wanted to depart; setting the laborer's son down upon the bald, desolate heath, and filling his vivid fancy with pictures in the shadowy distance, of all the treasures of the world and the glory of them, and then disdainfully casting an old blue stable-coat before the rich man's son.

CHAPTER VII.

NEXT morning Jörn Uhl had put on the stable-jacket that Fiete Cray in his rage had flung against the wall.

From this hour forth he had no longer any inclination for the school, for it had nothing to offer him. The instruction he got in religious dogma in the confirmation class bored him, because he could not understand it. These doctrines of sin and grace were incomprehensible to a hard-headed, practical mind like his, whose whole world of interest lay centred in the Uhl and its village. Sin came to him too late, and for grace he was not yet ready. For sin only began with robbing, thieving, and killing, while grace came much too soon, namely, when any one liked "to cast his sin upon the Lord." God seemed to him to be a kind of unpractical bookkeeper, who kept his accounts in good enough order in his own office, but was grossly deceived by his servants abroad.

As for Jörn, the farm-hands liked him, regarding him as their equal. A difficulty, however, arose when he began to show that he meant to be above them. He wanted them to willingly respect him, and to be a little more diligent about their work when they knew he was looking at them. Thus it came about that while they liked him well enough for sharing their lot and their work, they looked askance when they saw him eying a ploughman resting at the end of a furrow in some distant field, or a milkmaid that had forgot her milking as she sat in the cow-stall gossiping with some neighbor. Then he'd come striding straight across the field with some laughing remark, as though it were some chance errand that had brought him that way. Then they would refer to him among themselves as the Provost, and others again called him "the field-spy." But he paid no heed to their raillery. It troubled him not a jot so long as the land and the cattle on the Uhl got fair treatment. He had no cares and no interests beside that, and

this concentration of his will and soul upon one great object in early youth was a gain for his whole life.

It was for this reason, too, that in the two years following his confirmation the old farmer, Wilhelm Dreyer, held such a high place in his eyes. Long years ago this man had begun with little or nothing, had led a diligent, thrifty life for two score years, and was now, a man of over seventy, living in a fine old house of his own in the village street under the lindens. For many a year he had been estranged from Klaus Uhl, and had neither glance nor greeting for the elder sons of that family. He had always observed the world with keen, shrewd eyes, and well knew that the life they were leading, with its stupidity and frivolity, its cowardice and its evil conscience, at last ends in poverty, wickedness, and despair. But when the old man saw this lanky Jörn working in the fields, he'd come leaping and limping over the ditches with his shrewd, clean-shaven face and his long, iron-gray hair, and stand by the youth at his work, asking him questions and imparting to him all sorts of farm-lore that he had gathered in the experience of his long life. And Jörn would listen as seldom a man listens to his minister in church. In those years it was like a gospel for him. To work hard, and to be sober, and to manage his farm with shrewdness and thrift, those were the "good tidings" that the old evangelist Dreyer had preached to him.

When, long years afterward, his way once led him past the fields of the Uhl, and one of his sons was walking by his side, he raised his stick and pointed to a piece of ploughed land. "See, laddie," he said, "there, in the third land from the end, that's where old Dreyer taught me to turn the head of a furrow." And another time, "See, laddie, down there, where the beans are in blossom, that's where I cut my first swath of corn; and not far from there, by the ditch, I learnt from old Dreyer how to sharpen a scythe. I wasn't quite seventeen then. The wheat was ready to fall from the ear, and hands were not to be had to reap it. The old man came over to the Uhl, and said: 'Jörn, you must just tackle it yourself.' And as soon as I had started he came over himself with his scythe, — which was rusty, I remember, — and we mowed together till the sun went down. By then his scythe was bright enough, I'll warrant you. Afterward he laughed, and said, 'I didn't want to let thee beat me, laddie.' And I laughed back and

said, 'And I didn't want *you* to beat me.' I have never since slept so sound as I did that night."

Jörn grew more and more disliked by his brothers. He was a sort of evil conscience haunting them. That uncertain judgment with which boys of sixteen regard the grown-up members of their family prevented him from showing them any manifest contempt. He rather held himself shyly aloof from them, answering not a word when they railed at him, and blushing when they found him doing a task that they had neglected. He blushed both for himself and for them. But it was just this modesty and stillness in his demeanor that exasperated them the more. It was as if they felt in it some tacit condemnation of their conduct.

Sometimes when he went backwards and forwards between the house and the stables, with his gray-blue working blouse flapping around his gaunt limbs, his father, sitting in his cart ready to drive into town, would raise his whip and point out his youngest son to the elder brothers, crying out with his full, soft, jocund voice, "There's a bright specimen for you! Gad! what a Provost he would have made! I wouldn't let the fellow ride beside me into town for a five-pun' note. Do you mean to tell me that he's been bred on the Uhl?"

After his father had driven off, Hans would say: "I say, youngster, I am going to do my best to be the master here by and by. You don't like girls, and will run all your life in single harness. You're cut out for a lackey and a drudge. So just stay here with me on the farm! I'll see you have everything you want, and will look after you when you've worked yourself stiff."

But Hinnerk said straight out, "We want to do without a stableman next year, so that we can have his wages to have a good swill with."

Of an evening Jörn and Elsbe sat with Wieten in the room by the middle passage. In these last years Wieten had grown quieter and more pensive, especially since that day when Fiete Cray shouted his reproaches to her across the farmyard. She had such a retentive memory and such power of imagination that all the events which she had ever heard or seen in her past life seemed present to her, and stood around her like pictures that never paled or lost their vividness. Earlier, when she was still young, the courage of youth had helped her to get

the mastery over these pictures that thronged her imagination, and to put aside the gloomy and sad ones, and bring forward the brighter and kindlier ones. But gradually, with approaching age, the darker pictures haunted her more and more persistently. She would sometimes gaze mutely before her for hours at a time, with still, sad face. In such hours her fancy moved through the days of the past, from picture to picture, seeing now some tragic deed that in a single day had wrecked some family's happiness, anon some heavy sorrow weighing for years and years upon a house, anon bright, loving eyes wet with idle tears, anon some stern, hard face, flushed wild with rage. So she was drawn on from image to image, against her will. Much later, when she had grown very old, and lived in serene peace of mind upon Haze Farm, the pictures grew faint, and her worry from them ceased.

Of an evening Jörn used to sit there, almost inanimate, dead tired after his heavy work. He would say little, and go early to bed.

That was bad company for the sprightly little Elsbe, in whom the thought was growing stronger, warmer, and clearer, that she had once uttered when a child, "I must have something to love."

Now and again the big brothers had company in the front part of the house. Girls were found willing to share in their festivity. And whenever the loud shouts of the revellers or the suppressed sound of girls' laughter was heard coming across the great corridor to the little room in which the silent Wieten and Jörn sat, Elsbe would raise her fair dark head with its mass of hair and its soft, fresh lines of budding womanhood, and look restlessly toward the door. And Jörn would noisily change his posture, and say something to divert his sister's thoughts from the door. But she would get up restlessly and go toward the window or the door. Sometimes she would open the door and look out. Then she would hear two anxious voices calling from the table: "Elsbe, stay here!" "Elsbe, shut the door!" And she would return sullenly to the table, saying to herself, "Oh! if I were only grown up! Oh! if I were only grown up!"

During the whole Sunday forenoon Jörn used to work in the stables, and look every now and again where his sister was. Not till evening, when she went to see some girl friends of her

own age, did he get three or four hours entirely to himself. Then he would either sit quietly in his own room, or go over the way to Jasper Cray's humble cottage. Jörn Uhl! who was it that shaped thy mind and character in those days, when the heart of man is soft as wax beneath the seal? Who was thy guide in the days when parents can no longer hold us, and other folk will not touch the reins that trail behind us in our mad career down that road that leads to the Vanity Fair of life, to that great market-place where Fate asks solemnly of each of us, "What art thou worth?" For thus it is, at all times in our life we have our special advisers and guides, parents, school, and laws, experience, wives, trials, and sorrows; but in those years when one spring gale after the other comes rushing over the tops of the young and all too slender trees, we are left unsupported and helpless. Ho! how the branches cracked! how the leaves whirled and flew! We have scars to show yet on our souls from those wild storms of spring.

Old Dreyer was Jörn's teacher in all practical knowledge; but it was Jasper Cray who led him out into the broad, pathless fields of the wisdom of life. Klaus Uhl sat in the inn, talking his shrewd things, for what was there he did not know and understand? His son had to go over to little curly-headed Jasper Cray, and there, under the little thatch roof, he was first led to think for himself, and there got his first knowledge of life. The importance of those hours was the greater as manhood and boyhood were here met together; and as each thought highly of the other, it came to many a warm, straightforward argument between them. Where did we learn most? In the schools, and in the auditoriums of universities? We learnt most, I say, when we went abroad into the fields for ourselves, and tried to soar as best we might.

Like all the Crays, Jasper, too, had an interesting past. He had been down south in Germany in those tumultuous years when the German people so vehemently demanded a larger share in the government of their land. Jasper Cray of Wentorf had not been able to remain a silent spectator. It is not in the nature of a Cray to be neutral. A little hot in the face, a little out of breath, a little discomposed — in short, like one who has been violently thrown out of a dancing-room, and looks about him and then goes on his way as if nothing had happened; that's the way he came back to Wentorf.

If he had not taken a wife, or if he had postponed his marriage, he would probably have left home again and would have undertaken this and that, and would perhaps have grown rich; but while still under the nightmare of his miserable homecoming, he determined to marry, and in his hasty, unclear desire to put bit and bridle on his inclinations, he chanced upon a girl of the most modest wits imaginable, and one who, besides, grew homesick as soon as she could no longer see the chimney-pots of her parents' house. Children came, and sickness, and all the daily worries of poor folk. He was a day-laborer at the Uhl, and had known now for many a day that he would never be anything better. In winter, when there was no work, he made heather-brooms, brushes, and currycombs; as far as appearance went he seemed exactly like his comrades.

But sometimes his old restlessness broke forth afresh. At each annual festival of the children, toward midnight, when he had given his neighbor Klaus Uhl a "piece of his mind," and prophesied the decay and downfall of him, he would begin singing the old song he had once sung behind the barricades at Frankfurt; and in still later years, when the time of the parliamentary elections came around, he would hover about seven or eight houses where politically ignorant or indifferent people lived, and teach and rouse them.

To outward view he was like the rest of them; but in his heart there still slumbered the fantastic thoughts and dreams of old. And as these dreams were in such striking contrast with the modest, anxious reality, he had the choice of either looking at the world as one whose life had been embittered, and thus embittering it still more for himself and others, or of bantering himself good-humoredly for his errors, and riding over the fields of his neighbors, telling each landholder how badly his farm was managed.

Sitting under the eaves of the humble cottage many a Sunday evening Jörn and he talked about the world and its ways. His wife sat inside behind the open window; the children returned from their games on the Ringelshörn and went quietly to bed. The eldest, Gottfried, who was slow of speech and very backward at school, sat on a chair by the door in the midst of numbers of fine white shavings, cutting clothes-pegs, a business he drove on his own account. He had his mother's limited intelligence, and showed no interest for the things his

father used to discuss with Jörn Uhl. Since his confirmation he had never been to church, nor had he ever looked at a book or a newspaper. His intellectual life was bounded by what he had received from his ancestors, and by what he heard and saw along the country-side as a hawker. But although thus sparing of mental effort, and although his single concern was for what lay around about him and happened within a radius of ten miles or so, while everything else, religion, politics, news, remained a matter of indifference to him, he nevertheless slowly acquired a shrewd insight into what would further his modest ends, and bravely supported himself and his family later on; and without becoming wicked or godless, outflew many of his comrades at school, who had learnt a great deal, but scattered their energy by running after every novelty that was mentioned in the newspaper or in the village street.

"Jörn," said Jasper Cray, "what does it say in the New Testament? Of course, you don't know! No; you Uhls don't know. It says that every fifty years all property must be divided and allotted afresh. You Uhls have been too long there on that land of yours; we Crays ought to have a turn on your broad, flat acres. I tell you, we would manage matters a bit better on your farms than you would if you had our sand to deal with. You Uhls ought to become sand farmers for awhile, Jörn; just picture to yourself how your father would look driving his little cart, drawn by dogs. Why, he couldn't do it to save his life! Then he'd come to me. 'Mr. Cray, one moment! Mr. Cray, how do you do this?' Then I'd look him up and down a bit haughtily, and say, 'I've got no time to spare, Uhl, for such things. Go to my wife.'"

His wife cried out from her room, "You're just skiting, Jasper!"

"Whisht, Trina! . . . Look, Jörn, if you open your mouth to the west wind and gulp in as much as you want to live on, there's not a soul will say to you, 'Hey, be off, there, that's my wind.' But if you set yourself down somewhere or other, and in the sweat of your brow begin turning over as much land as you need in order to fill the bellies of yourself and your children, then men will say, 'Be off from there, that's my land!' Both lungs and stomach, Jörn, have got from God the right to be filled. So when you've enough to eat, and clothes to put on, be content. And if any one is clever and

hard-working enough to accomplish more for himself, nobody should hinder him, say I."

"That's too hard a matter for me to think out," said Jörn.

"Too hard? You don't say so! and yet you've got such a long, meditative nose, too. Look you. Isn't there land enough in the world, and isn't the government a strong man? How much land is there badly ploughed here in Schleswig-Holstein alone? Why, it would bring in twice as much if it were in the workmen's hands!"

"Don't make too sure about that," said Jörn; "all workmen wouldn't be such hard workers and so sober and thrifty as you think. Have you forgotten how you treated your twelve hundred marks, then?"

"Laddie, who's talking about old times?"

"I am," said Jörn, and slapped his long hand on his knee. "If I were to get ten thousand marks to-morrow, do you think I'd waste a single penny of it in spite of my seventeen years?"

"Just be still, Jörn," said Jasper Cray, "and talk about something else."

A muffled, threatening sound, like the mutter of a thunderstorm toward evening, came from the direction of the bed in the little room, and Trina Cray appeared, leaning out of the window in her bedroom jacket. "I'll tell you exactly how it was, Jörn."

"Now you'll hear something," said Jasper Cray, with a wink.

"Well, when Aunt Stina died, she left us twelve hundred marks. Her sister, old Trina, is still alive. We went and drew the money ourselves from the procurator. I remember it all as if it happened yesterday; Jasper had tied up the bright gold pieces and the silver crowns in a handkerchief. Near Gudendorf we sat down in the heath and counted it over again, for when the man counted it out to us at the office it was all of a dazzle to us.

"Well, at first he was quite sensible, but after a few days I saw that he was losing his appetite, and he'd leave his work half-done and come home and tear the drawer open so as to count the money again. And of a night he couldn't sleep.

"That lasted eight days or so, and he kept getting worse. He'd sit up in bed for hours at a time, at last he'd get up and sit on the drawer that held the money. I'd fall asleep again, but when day began to dawn and I opened my eyes,

there he would be sitting half-dressed, and had got the big axe between his knees.

"You can picture to yourself what a fright I'd get. I was afraid he was going crazy, and persuaded him to take the money to the savings-bank. Then he would no longer need to worry about it. I told him they had an iron chest there with seventeen locks to it, and I don't know what else besides. At first he wouldn't hear of it, but at last he took it to them and got a sort of little yellow book for it.

"But now things grew even worse than before. What I had to put up with from that man, Jörn! He was everlastingly reading in his bank-book, and saying that one sentence spat in the face of the other. The whole thing was clearly a swindle, he said, and if they'd been decent, honest people the book ought to have been at least five times as thick, something like a psalter — not such a rag of a thing as it was. At last, one night, when he got up to look for the book and couldn't find it immediately, what did he do but turn on me and say I had stolen it. So I advised him to draw his money out again, which he did.

"Now, Jörn, what do you think? He began drinking, Jörn. He gambled, he brawled, he quarrelled with me, with Uhl, and with Dominie Peters about the children. There was nothing but a constant hubbub in the house. Do you remember how you stood on the dung-heap at the Uhl brandishing the fork and shouting at the top of your voice, 'I'm Jasper Cray of Wentorf'? Yet nobody had touched him. And do you remember how you came back from town, bringing a chest of wine, and wanting to hold political meetings? Fancy us and wine and politics! And do you remember how you stood over there, striking the post with your purse, and crying, 'Jasper Cray has money'? That was a year, Jörn! While it lasted no one was so wretched as I. Afterward, when the money was all gone, and he had no longer any anxiety about it, and knew that he had to go to work again, he looked after his wife and children like a Christian once more, and I got on all right with him again. Fiete was five years old then; oh, dear, oh, dear, I wonder where Fiete is now?"

She shut the window.

"I'll bet you," said Jasper Cray, "that if any one said to her, here's twelve hundred marks, and here's the story of the

twelve hundred marks, take your choice, she'd choose the story. Sometimes I'm a bit hoity-toity, Jörn, and I can't say I think much of my wife Trina Cray's brain power, but when I think of this story, and especially when she freshens it up in my mind, I'm a humble man. That money came too sudden. And there was too much of it — twelve hundred marks. I wasn't prepared for it. When the other aunt dies, and she's about eighty now, then you'll see how fine I can take care of money."

"Just you wait," said Jörn, "then you'll be worried out of your life again by it, and you'll never rest till you've drunk yourself poor again."

"Wha-at!" said Jasper Cray, looking at Jörn with wide, reproachful eyes; "do you mean to say that a man doesn't get sense into his head in his old days?"

"Many do," said Jörn, "but not all, by a long chalk." With dark thoughts in his mind he glanced over toward the Uhl which lay in the shadow of the poplars and ashes on the other side of the road.

Many an evening they talked together. They were like an ill-matched pair of hounds crossing a field. Jasper Cray always ahead, his nose everywhere, yelping loudly; Jörn Uhl behind, growling, and constantly exhorted to caution and circumspection by the rashness of the other; and cautious and circumspect Jörn Uhl remained throughout his life.

Then when it grew dusk the head-servant used to come from over the way, bringing the two girls with him. His name was Harke Sim. He became a railway porter in later days, and was the man who prevented the accident near Hamburg by running toward the train with his coat on fire, so that the engine-driver pulled up just before he came to the broken rail. This Harke Sim used to bring his concertina under his arm, and they always made room for him on the bench under the eaves, although he hadn't too much elbow-room there. The girls sat down in the green grass by the roadside, and Harke Sim would play, and beat time with his head so stolidly, and looking so stupid with his half-shut eyes the while, that no one would ever have given him credit for an act requiring swift resolution and presence of mind.

After that they spoke about neighbor So-and-so's corn, and neighbor What-d'you-call-him's daughter. After that, about the

village schoolmaster and the minister; after that about Hamburg; after that about the king, and last of all about Death. By this, the moon hung low among the poplars, and a weasel would cross the road from time to time.

At the same hour one evening in a high street in Hamburg, close to St. Peter's Church, a young man was sitting in a bookseller's shop, waiting there as senior apprentice to serve any late customer that might drop in. He was the son of a clergyman somewhere on the edge of the Lüneberger Heath, and, having grown up in the open air, had come to loggerheads with Latin at an early stage in his career. But despite this distaste for Latin, he liked reading books in his own language, and the more fantastic they were the better they pleased him. So his father had got him a place in this shop beneath St. Peter's Church, where he was surrounded by books to his heart's content. He was delighted to get the situation; but it soon turned out that he had by no means obtained his ideal of life as yet. There were plenty of books there, and he might peer into them, and even now and again take one that pleased him home with him to read. But he felt that these books wanted a different setting, so to say — the great wide heath and the haystacks full of shady places and the old sand-pit; and poignant homesickness filled the young 'prentice's heart.

So he was sitting that evening in the back part of the shop in the little recess under the staircase, reading a book called "The Chronicles of Sparrow Alley," written by a certain Wilhelm Raabe, and he read, and read, and was no longer in Hamburg, but was far away from St. Peter's Church, playing near the straw-thatched manse again, and climbing the birch-tree by the old wall, and looking out over the wide land for the nearest church spire. Suddenly the shop door opened, and a young workman about his own age, a sturdy, thick-set youth in a gray jumper and with a round, fresh face and enterprising eyes and reddish hair, stood at the counter looking at him. And as the Lüneberger slowly got up, the customer laid a little pile of silver on the counter, and said, "I want to buy some books with this."

"Books?"

"Yes, books! Have you ever heard whether a certain Theodor Storm has written a book?"

"Storm? I should think he had. He's written a host of little novels."

"Novels? I don't know what that is; but it doesn't sound the right thing. I'll tell you straight what I mean. I carry out parcels for a business here in Herman Strasse, and I've waited till I got a chance to speak to you alone. It's like this. On our farm at home we had an old servant who was properly called Penn, but she was so mighty shrewd that people always called her Wieten Klook. Well, this Wieten Klook used to make out that a certain Theodor Storm and a man named Müllenhoff were going to write a book together. She herself hadn't much of an opinion of them and their projects; but if they by any chance really have written a book, I'd like to have it; and there's the money, six Prussian dollars."

The 'prentice in the shop under St. Peter's sat on the accountant's stool looking at this strange customer with eyes wide with astonishment. "Storm and Müllenhoff! What's the book about, then?"

"Well . . . to put it short . . . about how a man is to grow wise and rich. That's what I want to know."

Then the 'prentice from the Lüneberger Heath stood up and said, emphatically: "There's no such book to be had. Bless me, anything else but that! What! get wise by reading a book! I tell you you can grow stupid from many a book; and there's books'll drive you crazy. Others'll make you sad, and some'll make you laugh, perhaps. And others may teach you this and that, it's true, but as for making you wise and rich — tush! There are no such books. . . . You ask what Storm's written? Just wait a moment. . . . See, here's one. This is a book he wrote. There are stories in it about good and deep-natured men and all sorts of dreamers. He's one of our greatest poets."

The purchaser shook his head, biting his teeth together, and gazing at the counter. "Then Wieten must have been right after all when she said he'd come to no good."

The youth from the Lüneberger Heath pushed aside the books that lay before him. "My opinion's this. Look, now, these books, from the lowest to the topmost shelf, row above row — you can read 'em all through, and be as stupid and even stupider after it than you were before. One doesn't grow wise

from books, but from the life one lives. Do you come from the Lüneberger Heath?"

"No, from Dittmarsh."

"It's all the same. If I wanted to give you a piece of advice, I'd say: 'If you wish to grow wise and rich, then go to some place where there are no books.' . . . Books, indeed! why, if I hadn't my father, and if mother wouldn't cry her eyes out, I'd go straight to America. By George! I would. And woe betide the man who put a book under my nose after that."

"So that's your idea," said Fiete Cray, reflectively, as he picked up his money and put it back in his pocket. "My father and mother don't trouble a scrap about me. I've made up my mind to be rich. It's all the same how. I've heard both good and bad of America. Never of a cross between the two. I believe I'll do it."

"Do it, man; and if you've time and inclination, and if you get on, just write a line to the senior 'prentice in Herrold's bookshop. What's your name?"

"Fiete Cray of Wentorf."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE harvest had been gathered in and the lindens were full of yellow blossoms, when Jörn, one summer's day, walked past the old schoolhouse, carrying a ploughshare over his shoulder, on his way to the smith's. Suddenly a gooseberry flew out of the garden and struck his cap. Turning around he saw Lisbeth's fair head peeping out from among the bushes. He could do nothing but stand there and stare at her, and he felt not a little embarrassed when he saw her quickly making her way through the shrubs. She stood at the fence, and called over to him in a shy voice, "Jürgen, come here for a moment."

He glanced hastily around to see if any one were looking at him; but it was noon, and it seemed as if the village street, and all the houses in it, were fast asleep. So he took off his cap and walked over to her. During the last year he had but seldom seen Lisbeth, and had always passed her by with a brief "Good day." He had been hard at work; but she had been at school in the town. He had been ploughing all day long for months in the lonely fields, plodding through the loose soil, while she had been tripping daintily along the smooth and narrow footpaths of the town. He had changed for the worse and had grown cloddish and rough; while she had grown more refined in appearance, as well as in character and knowledge. He had felt all this in a vague way, and had shunned meeting her.

And to make matters worse Dame Nature had been playing her old, everlasting game with them. In the school orchard and on Ringelshörn the two children had been playmates and comrades, but she had loosed their hands and led them far apart from each other into new, strange lands, and had conjured up for each the most diverse and magic dreams, looking upon them the while with her wise, sweet smile. That is always her way. Afterward, after long years, when in solitude and silence she has brought them to the flowering season, she leads

her children together again, no longer as playmates, but as representatives of their sex. . . . Jörn Uhl and Lisbeth meet to-day once more, but it will be a mere outward and unhappy meeting, for they are both still immature, no longer boy and girl and not yet man and woman, and each is still dwelling in his own strange land.

Leaning against the fence she told him with a wise air what long holidays she had this time. The town school, she said, was to be broken up, and it would take a long time before another would be established. And did he know that she was going to be a governess?

No; he didn't know. He had never even heard that there were such people as governesses. He asked shyly whether she would soon be coming to visit Elsbe.

"Oh," she said, with a toss of her head, "Elsbe is a year older than I am. They are all quite different from me. There isn't a soul I can be friends with. It's dreadfully dreary."

He said that she really should come. It would give Elsbe so much pleasure.

"Do you really mean it?" she said, doubtingly. "I thought Elsbe didn't care about me any more. Just fancy, one evening when it was already dusk — it's not so long ago — she was standing near my window, and I heard her say to some one that I didn't understand a thing yet, and was just like a child. Will you be there, Jörn, if I come and call at the Uhl?"

"No," he said. "I have to work all day, and you mustn't come in the evening, or Elsbe will be taking you home afterward, and that doesn't do."

She bent her head as if she were meditating something. Presently she said, "Then, couldn't you come over to us, sometimes?"

He got a shock to think that such a thing should be expected of him. "No," he said, "I can't do that."

"But you don't need to come into the house, only into the garden. You can go around the back way. Grandfather and grandmother will be inside reading."

He took a quick glance at her. She seemed to him so unspeakably charming and refined. It was wonderful to think that there could be anything so dainty and neat in the world. But he didn't see how he could possibly feel comfortable talking to her. He certainly had a strong inclination to be with

her, but against that he knew that it would make him infinitely uncomfortable. But she insisted upon his coming, and took it as such a matter of course, and seemed so eager about it all, that he had to agree to it.

The whole afternoon he wondered how things would go with him that evening. He thought it not impossible that she might find him tedious and send him away again. And it almost seemed to him that among the many possibilities this was the most attractive. But again he thought that it might not be altogether out of the question that he might by chance be able to entertain her and win some approval in her eyes. The idea struck him that he might think out beforehand a subject to discuss with her, and he went over certain topics. He said to himself that a girl like Lisbeth would set most store by learning, and tried to remember certain conversations that Dominie Peters had had with the minister when he had been sitting by at his books. His range of knowledge was small, but he managed to get together a few subjects that he fancied might come in handy. He thought he would begin by speaking about a new line of steamers to Denmark, and afterward about agricultural schools that were just starting at that time, then about a newly invented incubator, and last of all, if the worst came to the worst, he could say a word or two about the practice of burning widows in India. He had read something on this subject in a piece of newspaper that a shopman in town had wrapped some goods in. His idea was to broach one of these subjects in some such casual way as — perhaps she had read . . . or what did she think about . . . or did she know anything about . . . and then he would unfold the treasures of his wisdom.

He started an hour too early, and went wandering along beside all the ditches and peering into them as though he were seeking a stray sheep, and at last reached the neighborhood of the orchard. There was a ditch there, full of clear, running water, and over it slanted a short willow-stump whose thick poll bristled with short, straight twigs, like hair. She was sitting on the tree-trunk almost hidden by these rods, and was dangling her feet over the water. She was looking very grave, and gave him a pensive nod as he politely raised his cap.

His heart was thumping so, that instead of clearing the ditch at a bound as he had intended, he half-stepped across it

with a long and very clumsy stride, and nearly got stuck in the boggy soil. He took a hasty look at her, and was almost certain that there was a smile in her eyes, but her face immediately resumed its grave look, so that the Indian widows involuntarily occurred to him, and he had luck with them. She told him she had just been reading about very serious things, and he asked hesitatingly was it necessary that she should do so. He thought she ought rather to read something amusing.

"Oh, no," she said, "one must know something about the sad side of life, too."

Then she inquired as to the exact shape of the funeral pyre, and whether the women took their ornaments with them when they went to be burned. She considered it, on the whole, a good thing, and declared that she would be quite willing to be burned if her husband should die, because she would only marry for love. And then she began to talk about jewelry again, and, as chance would have it, she had a brooch and a watch-chain in her pocket, and a watch had been promised her for Christmas.

So far, all had gone well beyond expectation, but somehow or other the conversation now began to flag. They gazed into the running water and said nothing. She felt unfriendly and defiant toward him, and thought to herself, "He's a downright yokel."

For his part, he was wishing he was a hundred miles away. He tortured himself to find something to say; but not an idea occurred to him that he thought would do. She was just as much a stranger to him as if she spoke a different language, and were quite another kind of being.

Finally he began telling her in a diffident voice about the two foals that had been born at the Uhl a few days before. But she had no desire to hear anything about them.

"What's that got to do with me?" she said, laughing, and her face had suddenly become quite girlish and happy and natural. Her lips parted and showed her teeth, her hair hung down over her ears, and all at once he recognized "Raintweet."

"Just so," he said, "but what shall we talk about, then?"

So she told him what her schoolmates talked of.

"To begin with, we discuss the teachers and the girls who don't happen to be by, and often we talk about boys. I don't,

though. I don't think it's becoming at all. But see, Jörn, your foot's in the water."

He pulled it out with a jerk as if he had been burnt. But all at once she saw how unhappy he was sitting there.

"Come," she said, "let's get up and go for a little walk. That's another thing they do in town. Some of them go for walks with the big boys, even."

He got up as she had bidden him, and watched her making her preparations. First she gave him her gold brooch and chain, and then the book. Next she put her dress right, though it seemed to him quite unnecessary, and then she said, "Shall I jump into your arms?"

"That's what you did that time when we wanted to catch the fox." He placed himself with arms outstretched and feet apart, as if to catch a runaway horse.

She laughed at him merrily. "I don't think I will, after all," she said; "you might crush me to death." And she got down decorously, and was extremely careful about the hem of her dress.

They walked up and down the narrow path under the low branches of the apple-trees. "Do you remember how you wouldn't go to the Children's Festival with me?"

"If your grandfather had only said to me, 'You'll have to walk with Lisbeth,' I'd have gone with you willingly, but I didn't venture to ask you yourself." He drew a deep breath when he had said it, and looked at her expectantly.

"Just tell me, supposing there was a dance now, would you dance with me?"

"Wouldn't I? From start to finish!" he said, and glanced at her, and in his eyes lay all his frank, simple-hearted admiration for her.

"Well!" she said, "now I'll tell you something. This time it's I who won't dance with you."

He hung his head and was silent. He found it quite natural that she shouldn't wish to dance with him.

Then her mood changed again, like April weather, and she laughed and said, winningly, "I didn't mean it so seriously, you know. I believe I would dance with you, after all, but you would have to hold me quite loosely, as they do in town, where they're so polite. But now you must go away again. I'll come with you as far as the willow and we'll say good-by

there. And come again on Sunday. I'll be sitting on the tree waiting for you."

When he reached the meadow on the other side of the water-course, they said good-by to each other and separated.

And this was how his little playmate crossed his path again. With her kindly help it seemed as if Jörn Uhl's transition from boyhood to youth was to be completed in the most natural and loveliest way. It seemed as if his life, as far as love was in question, was to run a smooth and even course. If only the sand-carting hadn't come eight days later.

But for the sand-carting Jörn Uhl would have been able to say when he came to die, "The sins of youth? What are they? Work and Want I have known in my youth, but never Sin." He would never have had to knit his brow in remembrance of the faults of his youth, like Jasper Cray and every one else. But as if it were a thing inevitable, as if every mortal, even the best, must needs get dust on his boots and spots on his coat, this sand-carting came, and Jörn's fair robe of honesty got a mighty rent in it.

Unsuspicious of any danger, he was driving with his sand-cart, toward evening, along below Ringelshörn. A fresh sea-breeze was blowing; the sky was full of driving clouds, gray and white and blue all mingled together. It was the sort of weather to take in great, deep breaths, and rejoice that one is alive to do it. Jörn Uhl did so, too. He sat on the foot-board of his cart, dangling his legs, humming a tune into the wind, and looking dreamily across the silent, level fields, and was just the very picture of a peaceful, contemplative farmer's lad. No one would have thought it possible that this long-limbed, long-faced fellow should this very evening, trembling in all his limbs, look Nature herself in her beautiful and terrible eyes with their dark and bottomless depths.

When he had driven around Ringelshörn, he saw Telse Dierk, whom people thereabouts called the Sand-lass, standing not far from her house on the edge of her sand-pit. She was gazing after a loaded cart which was just going around the curve of the road, and was leaning lightly on the long-handled shovel, with which she had been helping to load the sand. When she heard the rattling and creaking of Jörn's cart, she turned around and called to him: "So late, Jörn Uhl; but come along. It just suits me that you've come. I've not the

slightest inclination to knock off work yet awhile." She stood in front of the yellowish-white sand-bank, which reached high above her head, her intelligent eyes sparkling. She was barefooted, and her cheeks looked as rosy as though she had just arisen from a refreshing sleep. For ten years she had looked just the same; she stood there slim and lithe of body, full-breasted and bright-eyed, with fresh, untiring vigor in her whole bearing.

Ten years ago, when she was quite a young thing, she had had a bosom friend, the only daughter of a neighbor who had his little farm up at the top of the valley in which the Goldsoot lay, not far from the edge of the plateau. One day this friend of hers became engaged to a young farmer from the Geest. The two young people, as often happens among the Geest folk, had been "cobbled together," as they say; that is, their parents and some aunt or other, with a bent for match-making, had persuaded them that they ought to marry, pointing out how wonderfully well suited they were for each other in person and age and circumstances.

The bridegroom-elect let them have their own way. He was still a young man, his heart still untouched and fancy free. So when they introduced his bride to him at the next village fair, he took it as a matter of course, and found her quite passable. What weighed most with him was the consideration that his brother, to whom he was deeply attached, would now be able to take over their father's farm without their dividing it, which would not have been the case if he himself had married a portionless wife. And a division of the farm was hardly feasible, seeing how small it was and how poor its soil.

It was the mysterious will of Fate that Telse Dierk, dwelling by her sand-pit down in the marsh, should never have met the man her friend was engaged to before the wedding. The young bride to be, however, would often come down through the Goldsoot valley and talk to her about her lover's looks and ways, and about his eyes and his hair and his walk, and how he held this or that opinion which pleased or displeased her. Telse Dierk liked to listen, and once said in jest, "It's a pity that I never knew him. I believe he'd just have been the very man for me."

"Oh," said her friend, "isn't that strange? I've often thought exactly the same thing. He's so like you in lots of

ways, and often has ideas strangely like yours. He's always wanting to get to the bottom of things, you know, just as you are. He'll talk as long and as earnestly about a hen's egg as about Holy Baptism."

Fate willed it, too, that this fresh, hearty girl, who had never been ill in her life, had to remain at home with a severe cold during the days of the wedding; but on the ninth day after the wedding she went up the valley to visit the young wife in her new happiness. The two then saw each other for the first time. They were both tall and stalwart figures, such as are often seen in that part of the country — he of a dark, sun-browned complexion, with dark, curly hair; she quite fair, with hair as yellow as corn. They now looked upon each other for the first time, and started as if they had seen a ghost. The young bride had a great deal to talk about, and prattled and gossiped about the wedding. These two, however, had not a word to say.

When the twilight came and the sky began to fill with clouds and rain, Telse's friend, proud of having such a husband to do her bidding, asked him to escort her friend into the valley. Without a word he took down his cap and followed the guest out-of-doors. As they went down the hollow, the rain fell in streams. They had almost reached the Goldsoot, he walking behind her along the narrow, clayey path, when she slipped and almost fell backwards; and he caught and held her. And, as each believed that the darkness muffled and hid everything, they now gazed frank and full into each other's faces. But there were rents in the driving clouds, and the moon and the stars had suddenly appeared, throwing their spears of light from eye to eye, so that each saw the unveiled soul of the other; and in that moment both knew that they were fated to love each other, and no one else in the world, as long as ever they lived. Then they parted and fled, because they feared each other.

Years went by. It was a time of bitter anguish.

She worked from morning till night in the house, and would often of her own free will help to load the carts with sand, so as to tire herself out and have rest. And of an evening she would sit by her window behind her pinks and geraniums and look out into the marsh, in the direction where Ringelshörn could not be seen. She had refused one offer of marriage, and

treated the young men who would fain have spoken a word with her so harshly and coldly that they ceased once for all to trouble her.

But he, like her, was famishing for love. His wife had been brought up as an only child by foolish parents. Her every word had been gaped at and admired, and so, despite her shallow mind, she had acquired a certain pertness of speech. Her husband, on the contrary, was a clear-headed, thoughtful man, and carefully weighed everything he said; he therefore found it the more irksome that his wife should have so much to say about everybody and everything. After they had been married some years she bore a child. She never recovered from the great strain this put upon her weakly frame. All her youthful bloom fled, and thenceforth she was constantly ailing. Ere long the child died, and the marriage remained barren.

Years went by. The two lovers had tacitly resolved to avoid each other's house, and even to shun each other if they should by chance meet anywhere. But when they actually happened to meet, each thought to himself that no one would begrudge them the poor satisfaction of a swift, shy glance at the other's face. There slumbered, however, in both their breasts the unuttered hope that they would one day belong to each other. Neither of them dreamed, however, that this thought was in the other's mind; they hardly realized that it was in their own. Yet it was this hope that kept their passion within bounds.

Telse Dierk's father had fallen on the field of battle, and now her mother, too, died. Her mother had been a strong, capable woman in her time, but after her sudden bereavement her mind had always been subject to fits of restlessness, and this grew worse with her as she neared the fifties. Sometimes she would wander aimlessly around and around the house and about the fields. She liked to listen to the wind howling; and when her headaches got very bad she used to go up to Ringelshörn, and, standing there, on the bleak edge of the plateau, would find relief in exposing herself to the keen, cruel blast.

Some weeks after her mother's death, the lover came down to her one morning in broad daylight. He had first looked out from the hillside to see that no sand-carters were coming. She came out and confronted him on the threshold of her house, asking him harshly what he wanted there. It was an autumn

day with a fresh wind blowing. He asked what was to become of them both. Still keeping her outward calmness, she said in an even voice that things must remain as they were, for she could not trample God's commandments under foot, as though they did not exist, and she hoped he could not, either.

She took up a basket of washing, and stepped forward with dark, resolute face, and he was obliged to give way and go outside again. But he told her that he could not think that God's will was to crush him and all his joy to death with His commandments. He had begged his wife to sell their property, and move somewhere else; but she must have guessed his reasons, and had laughed at him and mocked him.

She looked at him darkly, as though it roused some deep repugnance in her to have to listen to what he was muttering there. Without getting another word from her, he had to turn back home.

Some time afterward he again spoke to her, as she was pulling up the bean-sticks in her garden and tying them in bundles. He spoke beseechingly, saying he could no longer bear it; begging her even to go away from Ringelshörn, since he could not. Then she had begun to weep bitterly. After this meeting, he found it easier to contrive to meet her every evening toward dusk near the Goldsoot. They both came to the pool with buckets in their hands, looked at each other long and earnestly, spoke a few words with each other — commonplace words, or sometimes even shy, burning words of affection; but they did not touch hands, but separated and went their ways again. He deceived himself into thinking he would be satisfied with these nightly meetings, and had besides put iron bands upon his desire; but she saw clearly that every day, with every look and movement, he was drawing her nearer to him. It seemed to her as though some irresistible Fate were dragging her toward him, and she felt her resistance growing feebler and feebler. A thousand persuasive voices spoke within her. She was in terror like a man whom some voluptuous madness is urging toward the brink of an abyss; her fear was such that she often trembled as though smitten by fever. Her single resource, the hard work that brought fatigue and sleep, now failed her. In her distress she hit upon a device which was as strange as it was dangerous; she determined to try if she could not deceive her

heart and her senses with some other lover, to whom she could belong without sin.

For several years she had taken no part in the social gatherings of the farmers around about. Young men seeking wives avoided her, despite her healthy beauty. For in the farmyards a report had got about that she was on too intimate a footing with the husband of her friend. Whilst she was fighting against this passion of hers, for which there were so many excuses, as bravely as any one in the land, men's tongues had already found her guilty and passed summary and cruel judgment.

About this time Jörn Uhl came four or five times of an evening, after farm work was over, to get sand, and it pleased her to see him so grave and silent. He looked at her as though to say, "You are just as lonely and as full of cares as I." Gradually she got to think more and more about him, and at last persuaded herself that she loved this fresh-cheeked youth. And she was glad of her delight in him, and of an evening would laugh aloud and say to herself, "Now you are rid of the other one, and have a bonnie young lover out of the every-day run of men." And when he, in his shy, uncertain way, grew a little brighter and looked at her with kindly eyes, and now and then ventured a jest, she laughed in her heart and thought: "It's a quiet and seemly way of being loved; without danger, but with a charm of its own for all that."

When he came the fourth evening, and they had both filled the cart, she invited him, in her fulness of heart, to come into the cottage and have a chat for awhile. She took a seat opposite him at the table just as she was, with her dress loose at the neck and with sleeves tucked up, leaning on her elbow. Smiling kindly upon him, she asked him about one thing and another, and appeared to be delighted and full of curiosity as to whether his quiet nature would thaw a little. And when he didn't answer she made things worse by saying, with a merry gleam in her gray eyes, "You're a bonnie lad, Jörn. You have such thoughtful eyes, as if you were always seeking for things that are hidden away; and you have such a strong-willed face, as though you were always determined to get your own way. That's what girls like. When you're three years older or so, you can pick out whoever you like for a sweetheart, and be sure she won't say you nay."

He could say nothing, but only looked at her.

She began afresh, asking: "What'll she be like, the girl you'll love — eh, Jörn?"

Then he stood up, and she got up, too. And thinking that he was offended — her own feminine vanity was hurt, too — she came up to him and said, quietly, and with a smile on her lips: "So in me you can find nothing to admire — I'm not even worth an answer, am I? Must you go away in a mood like that? Won't you take just one kiss from me along with you on your way?"

His heart stood still with the shock of her words, and he did not move. A moment afterward, however, he caught her to his breast with such a billow of wild passion that, in spite of her terror, she tore herself away from him with the greatest effort. She had wished to awaken a soft, mild flame, and had stirred up a furious blaze. She pushed him violently away and bade him go.

On the following evening, toward midnight, he stood at her window and knocked, begging her to let him in. She pretended not to hear him. She lay quite still, her hands beneath her head and tears running down her cheeks. She felt herself the unhappiest of women. Three or four nights he came in this way.

CHAPTER IX.

About this time the farmers' sons had arranged to have the so-called "bachelors' ball," and Jörn, too, received the usual invitation. Had it come fourteen days earlier, he would have put it aside as a thing that had no meaning for him. Why should he go to a ball? He would only have made himself ridiculous in his own eyes. But the experiences of these last eight days had stirred his soul to its depths. These eight days had played havoc in his young blood. It was like a garden that lies still at eventide — not a leaf moving, every branch covered thick in fairest leaf, and all the pathways clean — till toward midnight a storm sweeps over it, and rages till break of day. And next morning everything lies there dishevelled, disordered, and desolate. Rest and peace had turned into misery and cruel disquiet. His brothers laughed and jeered at him when they heard that he was going to the ball. But Elsbe greeted the news with a shout. "I'm glad," she said, "that you're getting a little life into you at last. You *were* such a tiresome fellow, Jörn. And you've got a nice new suit, too. You can dance with me first, so as to break the ice. And then afterward you'll have to dance with Lisbeth, won't you?" She wagged her head roguishly at him, and had a dance around the table by way of rehearsal; she danced so long for him, in fact, that at last she fell against the door and slipped upon her knees and burst out laughing. He looked at her and thought: "Faith, she's a pretty little thing, all fire and life; and she's always straightforward and truthful and kind." He went to the dance by himself, shyly, as though he were going on some evil errand.

He got away into a corner near the counter, and stood there for hours. Many who were present didn't know him at all, for he had never yet been in a public-house. They were puzzled, and asked who he was. And when they heard that he

was Klaus Uhl's youngest son, they wondered, and said: "That's the one that's said to be a dreamer." Some of the girls made up their minds to dance with him. They said to themselves, "Heigh, heigh! but he's a bonnie lad. How serious he looks with those eyes of his. How fine they'll look when they're laughing."

He stood there, unable to shake off his heavy thoughts. He felt vexed at times, and looked in the faces of the passers-by to see if they were observing him. And when any one looked at him for a moment he imagined to himself what he must be like in their eyes — a lank, ungainly figure; or, again, he thought he could read in some faces that his intimacy with the Sand-lass was known to them. Then, again, his glance grew proud when he thought, "If you only knew that that braw, lithe-limbed lass has kissed me!" He had often heard his brothers and Elsbe criticizing and discussing girls, but he had never taken the slightest interest in such conversations. Within the last eight days all that was changed. He now remembered all these expressions of theirs, and attentively observed the girls dancing past him, finding one handsome and another the reverse.

As he stood there doing nothing, his own room flitted before his imagination, looking just as he was wont to see it when he was in bed. And he imagined himself there, lying in bed again, with that feeling he had so often had, of being so young and yet so full of cares and anxiety. Then he saw the girls, in all their fresh bloom, go dancing past him again, saw the beautiful movements of their limbs and their happy faces. His eyes sought among the crowd for Lisbeth, and he made up his mind to win her. And this thought now drove out all others. He pictured to himself how he would take her home, then under the silent lindens he would take her in his arms, just as he had taken the Sand-lass. She shouldn't escape from him as she had done recently in the orchard. Then he caught sight of Lisbeth coming across the room. She sat down near Elsbe, who had gone bounding toward her. He gazed and gazed at her. It seemed to him that he had never really seen her before, such a difference had these few days worked in his nature. His eyes followed the blue bow she was wearing on the left shoulder of her white dress as she danced. He bent forward so as to see her whole figure, and the wish grew more and more ardent within him to clasp her to his breast to-night. But something

held him back, a feeling that he must not venture to approach her in this fashion, and he could not summon up courage enough to ask her to dance with him.

Some of the couples were already passing him on their way to the front rooms to drink wine together. They greeted each other, and teased each other, and talked over which room they were going to sit in, and walked by holding each other's hands.

He saw Elsbe among them, coming his way. She let go the hand of a young farmer, and came up to him. Her girlish face was lit with pleasure, and her heavy dark hair had fallen over her dress. Her full little figure was all agog with the excitement of the dance. "I say, Jörn, Harro Heinsen isn't here. He couldn't get leave of absence. I'm with Hans Jarren. He's still almost a mere boy, but that's no matter. We're going to have a bottle of wine between us. Go and get Lisbeth, and come and join us."

He answered, moodily, "I don't want to dance."

"That's because you haven't enough pluck, my boy. Drink a few glasses of punch; that'll cure you."

She was off; and for a wonder he did as she advised, ordering a glass of schnapps for himself, and then another, and yet another; and when he had drunk four glasses of the fiery liquor, he found courage to go over and speak to Lisbeth.

She had not danced much as yet. She had such a graceful, dainty bearing, and was wont to speak so few words, and so quietly, in her high, sweet-toned voice, and look as she spoke at the person she addressed with such strange wondering eyes, that most of the young men held aloof from her, being at a loss to know what to talk to her about. Her hair was exceedingly fair, and lay smooth and glossy, like raw silk, about her dainty head. Her dress was fresh and delicate as white blossoms, and seemed, like her face, to have the delicate hue of flowers. She looked so virginal, so pure and dewy, like a sunny, peaceful Sunday morning, when one's mind is free from care.

He felt out of place by her side. Eight days ago, despite his awkwardness, he could have stood there proudly, but now he was no longer a comrade for her. When they began dancing, and he found it difficult to get into the measure of the dance, he looked at her with a peculiar laugh, and when she hesitatingly asked, "What's the matter with you, Jörn?" he said,

" I can't see any good in dancing. It's a stupid, humming-top sort of business. Let's go in with the others and have some wine. You must learn that, too."

She drew back in terror of him, and said, " I never do that! "

" Oh, don't be so prudish." He tried to drag her away with him by the arm, but she tore herself free with eyes full of fear.

" Well, stay where you are," he said, " you little ninny."

Some who stood by saw and heard this, and laughed. He left her standing where she was, and went back to the counter, and sat down again and drank and gave himself up to a feeling of sullen defiance, gazing contemptuously on all around him.

Some who were by nature indifferent to feminine society, and indulged the other passion, that of drink, and others who, like him, had had their requests refused, came and joined him; and soon he was the centre of a wild group, shouting and singing. He sat silent among them, scowling before him. Then he would laugh mockingly to himself and drink again. His brother Hans, who was already drunk, and only looked truth honestly in the face when he was in this condition, — when sober he was a great braggart and self-deceiver, — this fellow came up, threw himself into a chair by his brother's side, and began to weep aloud.

" I thought you would remain a sober and honest man, Jörn. I've always been proud of you, though I have behaved as if I despised you. But now I see you're a good-for-nothing like me and our brothers, and our father, too." Then the younger brother started up as though he had been lying behind a hedge waiting for the word " good-for-nothing." He struck his fist on the table, drank and shouted at the top of his voice, and was the worst of the whole company at the table. " All Uhls are good-for-nothings," he said. " It's no good fighting against nature. The son of Klaus Uhl can't help but be a drunkard." Then he would strike the table again, and cry, " Who can beat the Uhls? " and try to join in a drinking-song that had been started, but of which he knew neither the words nor the tune.

A group of the more sensible ones, who were just then coming by, noticed the noise, and one of them said, " Isn't that Jörn Uhl? Up to this he has always been a Simple Simon, and couldn't say boo to a goose, and now he's grown the worst of the lot." But one man was there, Otto Lindemann was his name — the same man who afterward fought at Gravelotte.

He has been police magistrate now for many a day, and is a member of Parliament. Even in those days he was a good judge of character, and took a keen interest in all he saw. He gave Jörn a slap on the shoulder, and said, "No, Jörn Uhl, you can shout as loud as you like. You're not cut out for a good-for-nothing. Any one can see you're out of your element here. You've got the makings of a good man in you yet, Jörn Uhl," and he shook him by the shoulder so that the glasses danced on the table.

Toward morning he staggered home to the Uhl, and slept on till midday.

Wieten came to his bedside, and looked at him with eyes full of sorrow. "For your sake and for Elsbe's," she said, sadly, "I have stayed on here all these years. For Elsbe I have always been in fear and trembling, but I had set my hopes on you, Jörn." She sat down on the edge of the bed and began to cry. "I have had nothing but misfortune all my life," she said. "When I was but a mere child, I saw the whole house I lived in go to rack and ruin around me. I might well have hoped after that that I had had sorrow enough to bear for one life. But now when I'm growing gray, I have to wade through all this cummer and grief, and am fated to be a woman who has no hope left on earth. I shall leave the world with empty hands, and nothing to show for my life's work. I will have to hold out my empty hands to God, and say, 'Dear God, all that I loved has been lost to me on the road, and has fallen into the dirt.'" And so she went on wailing, wringing her hands in her lap, and crying bitterly.

He listened with closed eyes, and by and by she went out again. He remained in bed till toward evening, keeping his eyes shut for very shame. When it got dusk he got up and walked up and down the room. And when night came, he stole out and walked hastily toward Ringelshörn, to the house of the Sand-lass. He went to her window and called her name. For a long time there was no answer, and he stood there waiting. And suddenly the remembrance of his conduct flashed through his mind and broke down his dogged restraint of shame and defiance. The thought of the misery of the whole affair overwhelmed him, and he cried and sobbed like a boy that has been thrashed. At the sound of his sobbing, she got up and opened the window, and accused herself with hard and bitter

words. "I have heard how you carried on last night, Jörn. I am an unlucky and wretched being. Everything I touch turns to misfortune, and so I am going to leave this place. To-day I have sold my house and what is in it, and to-morrow at dawn I am going away and will never return."

"Oh! take me with you! I cannot go back home again; I cannot. I can never show my face to the servants on the farm again. I'll rather drown myself. No, you must take me with you."

She tried to soothe him, begging him to remember that he was still a youth, and that what had happened would soon be forgotten. He would be astonished, she told him, how fast wounds heal that people get when they are so young. Just those very people who had seen him so noisy and drunken must be shown that he had something better in him. It was wretched enough that she should have to leave her home and go among strangers. But he was stubborn, and maintained that he already could hear his father's laughter and his brothers' jeers; and that Wieten despised him, and everybody was saying that Klaus Uhl and all his family were going to the bad, and that he, the youngest, was the worst of them all. And therefore he would do the same as Fiete Cray had done, and go off into some foreign country.

She comforted him with all sorts of good advice, and spoke of her own misfortune, which he would make unbearable if he did himself any wanton injury or left his home on her account. But he persisted in wishing to go with her, and she gave way so far as to say he might wait for her on the top of Ringelshörn, early to-morrow morning, before daybreak. "And you shall come with me as far as the Haze and there we'll say good-by."

It was a sad night for both of them. In the light of her little lamp she went to and fro in the house, packing the few things together that were to be sent after her, and standing still at times as though distracted, and then returning sorrowfully to her work again, while big tears ran down her cheeks.

Jörn had gone home and put on his Sunday clothes and tied up his work-day things in a cloth, and then sat silent by the dark window, trying in vain to grasp the meaning of these hours. At one moment he would be making plans for the future, the next he would feel inclined to go into Wieten

Klook's room and tell her what he was going to do, and cry his heart out at her bedside, and hear her say, "Stay here, laddie, everything'll come right again with time."

Before daybreak he went out by the back door, across the foals' meadow and up over the heath, and sat waiting on a wayside stone till she came. She came with a firm, fresh step, and her eyes were bright and full of quiet happiness.

"That's right," she said. "I've got over everything else, and left it all behind me." She pointed to where the house of her lover lay, at the end of the heath. "And now it's your turn, Jörn, and I sha'n't find that such a hard job as the other. But I'm not going to send you away just yet. I'm going to give myself the pleasure of being with you a little longer." She spoke so decidedly and with such gay serenity that he didn't dare to contradict her. But he made up his mind to go with her, all the same, if it were to the very ends of the earth.

Up to the present he had had nothing he could reverence. His teacher had not understood how to make religion a real thing to him. It was religion that had painted over the fresh, gracious, noble figure of the Saviour, and spoilt it in his eyes. And he had no mother. Thus it came about that this warm-hearted lad had no one to love. But when a youth is of a quick, emotional nature, he will seek after an ideal, just as a man who has a good gun in his hand and likes shooting will seek for something to aim at. Then this girl came in his way, one who possessed everything that appeared desirable to one of his age — before all courage and a sound judgment, moral purity and great goodness of heart. In addition to this, there came the dark, mysterious spell which woman in her full bloom casts upon youth — a feeling in which something of adoration mingles with healthy young sensuousness.

She spoke kindly to him, just as she had done the evening before, looking at him and nodding to him pleasantly. "I'm glad that you're coming with me as far as Haze Wood, so that I can have one more good look at you. You'll make a fine man yet, Jörn, see if you don't. Don't be afraid that you'll fall into your brothers' evil ways. You've such a firm mouth and such deep, grave eyes, and you're already tall and lithe. When I look at you I picture to myself what you'll be as a man. It's a pity. If you were five years older I'd say, 'Come with me!' but that won't do now. For if you went with me

now, and afterward came to full manhood and had manly thoughts, then you'd think me too motherly, and wouldn't like to have me at your side. Probably you'd even think, 'She had her wits about her that time at Ringelshörn, when she took me with her. She wanted to have a young husband as long as she could.' One thought's as dreadful as the other. But you don't understand all this now, but you will believe me, for you are fond of me and know that I speak the truth."

Haze Farm lay still, a black mass beneath the dark gray sunless sky. But gradually the clouds were tipped with pale red from far-off hidden fires, and as they went on farther, talking in this way, mighty spokes of golden light pushed their way up behind the forest, mounting high aloft in the sky. And not long afterward a great red-glowing axle moved above the forest path.

"Whatever people may say about me, you must never believe it, Jörn. I am as pure as you are. If we had remained together, I should have sunk in your eyes. But if I go away and you never hear of me again, you will keep me in kindly remembrance. Yes, Jörn, you will even place me higher than I am. I will seem to you more beautiful and purer as time goes on, and it will make you proud and strong to think that such a girl loved you when you were still so young.

"You mustn't go thinking that these experiences of the last few days will spoil you for good. It seems as if we human beings cannot go through life guiltless, as if such a thing were not to be. Fate does not rest till it has made us guilty. The great thing is, Jörn, for you to cling fast to your faith in what's good, in spite of the past, and not to give up your love and true-heartedness. For to be guilty and then give up the fight for what's good means death, but to be guilty and yet go on struggling for the good, that's what gives human life it's real worth. You have a strong will in you, Jörn, that's why I like you so much. What you have lived through in these days is nothing more for you than a storm is for a sturdy young tree. The storm will go on sweeping over you for a few weeks longer. You will feel unhappy and unsettled, and men will jeer at you, no doubt. Then it will be over, and you will see how much stronger you are and how much firmer you stand on your feet, and how much farther you can see."

This was the way she talked to him — in a quiet, decided

voice, walking beside him briskly and cheerfully, as if she had not a care in the world. They looked at each other as they went along, and her hair that was as fair as his was ruddy with the morning light of the sky's fires. He felt that this was one of the great hours of his life, and that he would never again have moments full of such joy and such sorrow; for he, too, now knew that they must part. Beneath her firm, earnest words the deeper worth and the deeper necessity of this bitter separation had become clear to him.

She pointed to the sun now in fierce, silent battle with immense, gray, jagged clouds. "Look, Jörn, it's all like a great gray house on the outside. But there's a glow of light in it, and the gleam of the fire is streaming out at windows and doors. The master's in his smithy, and the glowing iron lies broad and thick on the anvil. Jörn, lad, I have no fear for you. Somewhere or other happiness must be waiting for us yet. . . .

"Now, go. Go quickly, Jörn. Don't let us torture ourselves with long good-bys."

He stood with quivering lips, looking at her.

"It's not easy, laddie." She kissed him affectionately and impetuously. "Be a real good man, Jörn." She took another long look at him; her eyes had a cheery brightness in them. "I've no fears for you." And then she went on her way, with light steps, as though she were going to a festival, and he saw her pass down the woodland path and disappear among the hazels.

For awhile he stood there with bated breath and eyes full of tears; then he walked away with long, swift strides. He found his bundle by the hedge, where he had left it, and put on his working clothes under the shelter of the embankment. Then he ran, with long leaps, straight across the heath, sprang down the slope and brought the horses from the paddock. At a quick trot he came riding into the farmyard, without stopping to go into the house, harnessed up the horses, and then went off and worked the whole day out in the fields.

But he was not to get off so easily. Next day his brothers saw him, and jeered and laughed at him for having been such a simpleton as to let the schoolmaster's girl get the best of him, and for having afterward behaved as if he had taken leave of his senses.

By the afternoon, when he rode back to the farm to change horses, they had heard everything. They told him that he had

everlastingly disgraced himself and his whole family. It would have been better, they said, if he had gone right away with the girl. For the whole village was just buzzing with this unheard-of story; people said that he had been five nights with this hussy of a woman. How could they show their noses in the village after that? But as for him, why, he was ruined once for all in the eyes of the whole country around.

And that evening, when he was taking a lonely walk through the field in order to be out of the way of the people in the house, a red head popped up in a ditch by the wayside, and Gottfried Cray, who was cutting grass for his goat, called to him, "I say, Jörn, father says I'm to tell you that one man's weakness is women, and another's is money. And he says he doesn't believe that you've chosen the best of the two, neither. That's what I'm to tell you, Jörn."

That night he had a strange dream. He dreamt he was once more sitting on the stone by the highroad on the heath, where he had been sitting yesterday morning. And three people came along the road. In the middle was an old, venerable man, and to the left and right of him were his children, a young man and a young girl. The girl was the one he had walked with yesterday. The young man he had never seen in his life. He looked like a farmer serving as a soldier, had a firm, free step and a noble face, with eyes full of courage and goodness, and indeed bore a close resemblance to his sister who was walking on the other side.

As the three went past him, they stopped and began to talk about him as people talk in the presence of one who is asleep. The girl said, "Shall I waken him, so that he may go with me?" The old man, with a strange, deep look into his breast, said, "You can go as far as the edge of the forest with him. Show him the stars in their courses, and show him how the sun rises, and what birds those are down in the hazel thickets." The young man said, "If I may, father, I would fain go with him, too, for he is my brother."

"Not yet," said the old man. "As soon as he comes into the wood and it grows dark, then you can go with him. Take good care of him, children, so that he may reach home safely, for he has got his best clothes on." The girl said, "Shall we fetch Lisbeth? He's very fond of her." "Not yet," said the old man, "for he doesn't know how to plough properly yet."

The son said, "Shall we take his father with us?" "Not yet," said the old man, "he must carry him a stage farther. He must go straight on, pretty slowly for awhile, and quite alone, and keep on shovelling till the cart's full." He heard all this like one who comes out of sleep and who has not yet his wits about him. The old man went away. He clearly heard his steps get fainter along the road. The young man and the girl remained standing near him by the stone. He forgot them, however, for of a sudden it was Wieten's voice he heard saying, "I would never have thought it possible that our dear Lord God should be walking in broad daylight on the Wentorf Heath road. He looks like a Dittmarsh farmer, but you can see who it is by His walk."

Thereupon he thought he could fall asleep again with good conscience, and he did so.

He slept till Wieten woke him and said to him, "Jörn, laddie, if you want to get the ploughing of the fallow land over to-day, it's time for you to be up. The sun's already over Ringelshörn."

CHAPTER X.

THE experiences of those few days affected him for years and years.

They affected him as a bitterly keen winter, with wonderful nights full of stars, does a young tree. Smitten to the very core by the frost, it withdraws all its life into itself, and goes on living in a silent world half-way between wake and sleep, between weird terrors and sweetest dreams. Little by little, when the sun flatters it, and comes and lays his cheek caressingly against the cold bark, it gradually thaws and grows cheerful again. So, too, did this youth lock up in his own breast all the beauty and all the sadness that had passed into his soul that early morning yonder in the Haze Woods. He closed both eyes and lips so as to be undisturbed within. He grew quiet and taciturn. Some, who were fools, said that he was stupid. But those who met him in these years, and looked into those shy, deep-set, earnest eyes, knew, if they were men of any insight or fineness of feeling, that they were looking as it were into an old country church, with its dim twilight and darkness, and golden shafts of light striking sheer down through high windows; and right at the back they saw high, silent tapers burning upon the golden gleaming altar.

He was without friends and without books, thrown quite upon himself. Thus did he come to deck out the chamber of his soul with manifold strange forms, after his own heart.

Just as Jan Reepen did, who was Volkmar Harsen's man. He was a philosopher or a poet, or may be a good-for-nothing, who knows? He painted the whitewashed walls of his bare room from top to bottom, finally lying on his stomach or standing upon a chair, with everything, as he said, that there is in the world — of every species one. There stood man and every kind of beast. He even attempted to portray the elements, and the heavenly bodies, and the good and wicked angels,

and the Holy Trinity. And for each and everything he found a distinctive form. It has never been clearly found out what was in him, for he died of inflammation of the brain, after talking about his pictures, all that last night, in wild and beautiful phantasies.

And in the same motley did Jörn Uhl now fit out the chambers of his mind.

And many a farmer's son there is in Germany who has to go through college and university in obedience to the will of some austere father, and finds it bitterly hard to have to leave the old farm when the vacation is at an end! It will even happen that the farmer finds his great son blubbering to himself in some remote corner of the stables, and that he has to use the whip to rid the farm of him. Back at school, sitting at his desk, for days he is present only in body; his spirit is still wandering among the great barns and halls of the homestead. The grumpy tones of his religious instructor — for many religious instructors are grumpy when they ought to be cheery — make him prick up his ears and think of the good fat swine at home; and when the rector thumps the desk to show the measured beat of some Latin ode, he'll think on the beat of the flails on the threshing-floors in winter. If Fate means well by him it will set him down afterward in some place where he has the country near at hand, and where he can take a walk of a Sunday with his son's hand in his, and stand at the hedge-gate, and in winter go through the full stable of some farmer friend, who despises his talk about farming, and will think to himself, "Why didn't my father let me be a king? As it is, I have to be a mere servant."

But if Fate is hard on him, if he must earn his daily bread cooped up between the high walls of some great city, he will try in his distress to start a little farm for himself, and begin with a couple of pigeons, and then buy a hutch for a few rabbits, and at last he'll come home with a goat, and get into hot water with the landlord and have all sorts of worry.

There are farmers' sons again — and in this Dittmarsh land, and up here among this broody race of Frisians and Saxons, they are not so rare — who have a strong impulse toward learning and knowledge, but are obliged to follow the iron will of their father and stay at home to plough. These youths are almost unhappier than the others. "Father," says the lad, "I want

to study." But the farmer replies, "You shall study farming." For the father is frightened of the expense of sending his son to college, or he thinks, perchance, that a farmer's life is the best thing in the world; or else he thinks it's a boy's whim that will pass by like a wearisome rainy day if you give it time; or he has a grudge against books. "Tut! lad! What are you thinking about? Wishing to moon over yon books all the day? Hold your tongue, I say, and go over to the smith's and just ask if the ploughshare's ready."

And so the lad has to grow up on the farm, in the stables, and behind the plough; to-day with a hay-fork, to-morrow with the reins in his hands the whole day long.

And during his work his restless spirit begins to fret and fume and drive him to and fro. Like some captive panther, full of the remembrance of its forest freedom, that paces without a moment's peace up and down, up and down, behind the bars of its cage, comfortless in its vain despair, his soul knows no rest, gazing ceaselessly between the palings of the fence that imprisons him, gazing and longing. Left without a teacher or guide, his mind muses and broods, and hutches with the most strange and crack-brained fancies. This race of Frisians has a peculiar gift and bent for philosophy and mathematics, and it's not long ere the adventurous skater comes to smooth, bare ice, and likely enough finds places where under the dark transparent covering yawn green and immeasurable depths, in which he sees multitudes of forms he can neither master nor explain. Then he'll go on a shy, unwilling errand to the bookseller's in the town, and ask for a book about "Mankind, how did it have its beginnings, and what's to be the end of it?" or "Whether there's a book about the calculation of all sorts of dimensions and the construction of the universe." Then he'll sit late into the night poring over the book by the dim light of the stable lamp, and puzzle his brain, and think he understands it, living in chaotic worlds of thought, and getting deeper and deeper into the bog. Those who live round about him don't understand him, and his own brother calls him "the Latin-smitten ploughman." He has no eyes for the girls who are coming into blossom around him, and who cast their glances on him, or if he puts out his hand to catch one of them some day, he is as awkward about it as a puppy that has got into a fowl-yard. His eyes are turned more and more to what

is within him. For there he can see such strange things. At last he sees there clearly written in staring red, the words, "Seek Death. Thy place is not here among men." Then people bring the body of the farmer's son to the grave with much funeral pomp, according to the size of his farmer's farm, and neither trouble themselves nor wonder much more about him, but say, "He just went clean daft wi' thae ideas o' his!" And while still in the churchyard they begin talking about rents and the price of wheat again.

A stranger had come to the Uhl, asking after remnants of antique furniture. He chanced to see the old chest standing in the stable, and made an offer for it, but was sent away. Jörn, who had noticed what covetous eyes the dealer had cast upon the box, now examined it for the first time in his life, and as he liked the carvings and workmanship of it, he cleaned it up one afternoon, put the lock in order, and brought it into his room and laid his Sunday clothes in it. He also kept his psalter in it, and a well-thumbed old reading-book of Klaus Harms, as well as another old book with yellowed and tattered cover — Littrow's "Wonders of the Heavens." This book had come from Haze Farm with Jörn's mother, and was a kind of popular astronomy. Nothing else was kept in the chest.

When Jörn had finished work for the day, he would sit in the old Saxon armchair with its straw-woven seat, and put his legs up on the chest and light his short pipe, and look around his little room with its bare, whitewashed walls and little looking-glass, and gaze through the window into the apple orchard and puff away at his pipe, drawing a very long, grave face the while, for was he not at work completing the building and fitting out of his soul?

He had no thoughts of marrying. Tut! Tut! all that was now past. He had gathered more experience than many an old man in that branch of wisdom. He thought to himself, though, that it must be a beautiful thing to win for one's self one of these remarkable creatures with their melting eyes and loose, lithe limbs; but such a thing was not for him. He was just a strange and wonderful exception. It was sad to confess it, but it was true. For had it not been confirmed by his experience? The girl who had been his comrade in his boyhood was now a stranger to him; she had looked down patron-

izingly on him, and had run away from him with fear in her eyes, when she had read in his face the feelings that the other had aroused in him. But this other one, before whom he had stood in such wild commotion, full of hot, new-born desires, had turned into a saint. His blood rushed to his face with shame when he thought of these two girls. And he resolved never again to sue for a woman's love. He made up his mind never again to enter that specially woful domain of human life; he would remain a bachelor all his days. "Thiess is one, too," he said. "It runs in the family."

So *that* was done with, then, once for all. The daughter of a neighboring farmer sometimes came by with the milking yoke on her shoulders when he was out a-field with his team. She always wished him good day, and would fain have loitered for a word or two with him. Of a Sunday afternoon she would come to see Elsbe, and pass through the apple orchard underneath his window and nod to him, and look at him with kindly, sensible eyes. She was a comely, cheery lass. But when he saw her coming he would knit his brows like one who has hard and knotty problems to think about, or like a man of threescore years or so who has no time and no interest for girls. And yet at times it would occur to him: "Strange, what a firm brisk step she has;" or, of another girl, "She is tall and slim, and quick and sprightly as a three-year-old mare;" or of another, "Bonnie she looks, with her hips a-swing beneath the milking yoke." But not a jot farther. Away with the thought, away with it from his breast! Those are the creatures that bring a man nothing but unrest and loss of time, and the jeers of his fellows.

But once or twice this happened to him — both times it was on a Sunday. He had spent the whole afternoon doing nothing, and toward evening had gone for a walk across the fields. And somehow his thoughts had got out of his control, and made off to the Sand-lass. He lived through it all again. He was so deep in his dreaming and saw the beautiful, tall form and her serene eyes and heard her deep voice all so clearly, that he didn't come back to reality till he all of a sudden heard his own voice and noticed that he was speaking to her with swift, persuasive words. He was standing leaning against a hedge, and had no idea how he had got there. He pulled himself together, and the blood rushed to his face. For the rest of

the evening, however, his peace of mind was gone. He jumped on a horse and rode to the Foreland after the foals that were grazing there, and came back, and walked through the apple orchard, going from tree to tree, feeling the trunks and scraping moss from the bark and looking up into the branches and smiling; and then he felt himself unhappy again, and wanted something, and knew not what, and felt ashamed of himself, and thought of going away out into the wide world and plunging into some great whirl of life, into some task or fight, that he might escape from this thing which was bringing him into such turmoil and discord.

And in the night he could not tell whether he was dreaming or awake, the girl came into his room in the full splendor of her beauty and strength, as she had bent over the table to him that night, and just as then, she now again came close to him, and was tender and loving, and told him of her love and longing for him. Then he kissed her, in a kiss so long and vehement, a kiss more and more glowing and sweet, till the excitement woke him. Then he felt full of shame of himself. For days he went about his work with scowling face, and spoke with no one and was specially unkind in his manner toward Elsbe.

And one day when he had brought a load of corn into town, and was on the way through the street to the dealer's office, he saw, in a paper shop, a small picture of two young women sitting right and left on the side of a marble well. They were tall and powerfully built, and even the one that was almost naked had a fine and good-natured face. There was something high-bred and noble in their looks, and he could not understand how they had come to let themselves be painted in this guise. Under the picture he saw written in Latin letters, "Sacred and Profane Love," by Titian. For a long time he stood looking at it, and then made up his mind and went into the shop, where to his no slight embarrassment he found a young woman who asked what he wanted. He assumed a proud and careless look and pointed to the picture with the end of his whip, and finally purchased it for a few shillings. He hid it carefully, as a great treasure, between his coat and vest, and took it home and put it away right at the bottom of the old chest; and of a Sunday afternoon, when he sat smoking and thinking in his room, he would take it out and place it on the lid of the box

opposite where he was sitting, and gaze at it untiringly, and was always in fear lest some one should come in and discover his secret.

Jörn Uhl was done with women-folk then, but he found it no such easy matter to be done with the world. For the world is a lady a man cannot turn his back upon so easily. He may turn away, but she is still there; he turns in the other direction, and there she is again. He may shut his eyes, but she'll buzz and screech in his ears; he may close his ears, but she'll play her pranks and cut her capers before his eyes. He must choose which side he'll be on, whether he'll keep peace with her or pick a quarrel with her. As for Jörn, his age and his mood at this time, as well as the argumentative stock to which he belonged, impelled him to take sides against her.

"Good dame," he said, "you're old and you're ugly. Everything about you, from the crown of your head to the sole of your foot, is cracked and crazy. I'd have you know that I'm Jörn Uhl of Wentorf." . . . He had drawn his eyebrows down into such a scowl that he couldn't see the greatness and wonder of things; and carried his nose so high that he lost sight of all their beauty.

No living thing, whether it crept or flew, whether it pranked in gay robes or sat in mourning, whether it wore coat or petticoat, whether it was round or square, escaped his judgment. There was not a thing in the world, be it bird or beast, round or square, grave or gay, male or female, that could escape his stern and righteous censorship. And therefore he saw, looming in the distance, the time when he would have to confess that the world had no place in it for such as he. A clean separation once for all between him and the world he resolved was the only thing possible. In the solitude of his own room and of Wieten's quarters, he made up his mind to be a servant, for the present to his father, then afterward to his brothers, but to make them pay him a yearly wage. What he earned in this way he was going to put into the town Savings Bank, of which he had heard said it was thoroughly safe. Afterward, when he was old, he would buy a lonely little farm and live with Wieten, far from the turmoil of the world, till he died.

Now, if the world and all the arrangements of Nature and of man found no favor in Jörn's eyes, it could not be expected

that He who had made the heavens and the earth would get off lightly either.

Granted that Jörn went to church. He had done so for the last six months; for he saw that the thrifty, the sober, and the people who were a little old-fashioned did so, and he had made up his mind just to be a man after that style, too. Old Dreyer went to church, and he, as every one knew, had begun as a farm-laborer, and was now a wealthy man. And Reder, the old plumber, went to church, though he had the name of being hard-hearted and miserly; but it was to his credit that he still wore the coat he had gone to the sacrament in fifty years before. And Thomas Lucht's wife, who left the common bedroom in which she and her children slept, when her husband came home from his wild drinking and card-playing. She, too, sat every Sunday with tight-pressed lips in her family pew. These and others like them, venerable and thrifty folk, went to church. But the young people, and the wild spirits, and those who liked to show off, did not. Jörn Uhl wished to feel himself among the decent folk, and he wanted to show it somehow in outward form, that's why he went to church.

He went to church, but found it mortally weary. In the first place he took offence, and could not get over it, at the fact that the man who preached in the church on Sundays was known in all the country round as a hard drinker and inveterate card-player. Although Dreyer had said to him, "It doesn't matter about the man, Jörn, or the sort of life he leads, so much as whether he preaches God's word truly or not." But Jörn couldn't persuade himself to believe it. Apart from that, however, it was this so-called Gospel that the sturdy little pastor proclaimed that went right against the grain with him. For the preacher said: "All that we do and all that we say is evil from our youth up, and whosoever puts his faith in his life and his works is everlastingly damned." And "Glory be to the Trinity for ever and ever," and "God's Son, born from everlasting," and "Only believe and thou shalt be saved." That was about the contents of the sermons he gave.

Jörn Uhl listened attentively from his seat, and failed entirely to discover any connection between these doctrines and the wild doings in the village, or his own ploughing and harrowing. He wondered to himself that God's word could be so thoroughly unpractical. According to his idea, it would have to run, one

verse after the other, something like this: "A farmer who doesn't weed the docks and thistles out of his land shall not be saved." "He who by hard work and an honest, sober life doubles his property, will come out top." "For every evening that a young man wastes at the public-house, he must lose a year in heaven." And so on. That's the way he would fain have rewritten the Bible.

Sometimes when the little parson read from the altar or from the pulpit the allotted portions of Scripture, in a chanting, wavy sort of voice, Jörn seemed to hear something different from what he heard in the sermon that followed. He seemed to be listening to some old deep wisdom and great strong thoughts plucked right out of the heart of human life. He was like a man lying on the edge of a forest surrounded by the humming and twitter of birds and insects, and hearing far off in the depths of the wood a fountain flowing with its full, clear, heavy note of waters. And with the unwisdom of his youth and his natural heaviness of mind it never occurred to him to read through St. Mark or St. Luke and see whether the little parson wasn't suppressing one part of the gospel or adulterating another.

"You must always sit in the same seat, Jörn!" old Dreyer had said. "For sixty years I have every Sunday sat in my place in the third row, not counting the year I was away on service in the Danish war."

So Jörn Uhl sat there every Sunday in the same place. And so also it came about that the only reason why Jörn thought anything of God was because it seemed to him that God had something old-fashioned about him.

In the spring of the following year, however, something took place that was like a refreshing fall of dew upon the world within him. And it was good that it was so. For his finer nature was in danger of perishing of drought, like young pastureland in April when the east wind has been blowing for four weeks at a stretch.

It happened in this way:

At the time when the fields were being emptied of their corn, certain hounds went wild. Their owners had neither been sober nor clever enough to bring up even a dog. And so these

dogs passed their time wild in the fields, and the farmers to whom they belonged passed theirs at the inn.

It soon became known that sheep had been torn to pieces and fowl-yards harried. The workmen's children who had to go along the Kirchensteig on their way to school walked to and fro in fear and trembling. One day one of them came breathless and terror-stricken into the village, saying the dogs had been after her. Nothing was done, however, to put a stop to the evil; the owners of the dogs laughed, and nobody ventured to take action against them, for they were the foremost people in the village, were members of the Savings Bank committee, and could repay both good and evil that was done them. Thus it happened that one Sunday morning the Kamp children, who were going along the Kirchensteig, saw the dogs worrying a calf belonging to one of the Kamp workmen. The workman's children began to weep and cry, saying that they had nothing but this one calf, and got two big lads to go with them to call the dogs off. But the boys were afraid. So the two little children, in their terror lest their calf should be killed, advanced alone, thinking in their childish way that their father would beat them unless they saved the calf. When the children, sobbing with fear, came near them, the hounds did not make off, but came toward the little girl who was trying to get near the calf and kept on clapping her hands and calling to it with terms of childish affection. When the two big boys saw this their courage left them and they ran away, shouting, toward the village, which was a long way off. The two children, however, stood there alone, and the dogs began to play with them. They crouched, sprang forward, and then drew back and crouched again, and tugged at the children's clothes till one of the children fell and something terrible seemed about to happen.

Just then Jörn Uhl came out of a neighboring bean-field in his Sunday clothes, and caught sight of what was taking place. He clenched his teeth and thought, "These cursed louts! Has it come to this, that the village children are to be eaten by their dogs?" His face flushed with anger and his eyes were on fire. Running with long strides he hurried to the spot. One dog made off. The other in fury, with hair bristling with rage, showed fight, and got the full force of Jörn's foot in its side. Howling, and with foaming mouth, it sprang at him, just as he was stooping toward the child. The brute struck

him just as he was straightening himself, and, as he had no good hold on anything, its weight and impetus brought him to his knees. With a firm grip of his big, bony hands he pressed the furious brute to his breast, and with the utmost effort kept it from his throat, which it was wildly struggling to reach, contorting its body fearfully and foaming at the mouth. Jörn's face was white, and it was only with extreme difficulty that he held his own. As soon as he felt himself firm on his knees, he uttered a wild cry, clutched the hound's throat with a choking grip, bending his whole body forward, and, in his rage, broke its neck. For many a year afterward this deed was talked about by the villagers. He himself, too, in later years, when happier circumstances had brought the genial Thiessen side of his nature to light, was fonder of speaking about this adventure near the bean stubble than about that other terrible experience — the day when he stood bent over the gun-carriage, hurling pieces of jagged iron against people who, as he added in a softer voice, had done no harm to him personally and were no worse than himself.

When the story was brought to the farm, next day, by the school-children, he noticed with what eyes of wonder the milk-maid looked at him. And the stableman related that the lads in the school playground had had a great argument as to how Jörn had managed to kneel and clutch the dog as he had done, and everywhere groups of boys were standing around one of their fellows, who was on his knees, showing the others the grip. And the teacher had had some trouble in saving his yellow-haired Fido from their clutches.

A week later he again went across the fields to the Kirchensteig, and, walking toward the church, he overtook the Kamp children, who were also on their way. They stepped aside from the path into the grass and looked up at him. But the little girl whom he had saved put her hand mutely into his, and went trotting along by his side as far as the church door without saying a word. He went in and heard a sermon about faith, and how so-called good works and a so-called honest life were mostly suspicious things, a mere brilliant sort of vice.

As he was leaving the church, Rose, the old tailor, a man renowned for his gift of silence all over the country-side, came hastening after him. He limped along at Jörn's side, for he was already very old, made a few remarks about the weather,

then pulled up suddenly, and began, in his shy way, to fumble his soft fingers, tailor-fashion, over the front of his companion's coat and vest.

"Bring the jacket in to me, Jörn," he said, "you can see the marks of the beastie's claws still on it. I'll put it to rights with a little silk. I'll do it for nothing, Jörn. . . . But, bless me, what was it I was going to say, Jörn? It doesn't so much matter about the jacket, I was thinkin', Jörn, as about the heart that beats under it, and that must just belong to God."

Jörn Uhl did not know what to say to this; for where do mere laymen, I'd like to know, talk about such things in our country? To talk about God and the soul is the function of the parson in his pulpit.

"I wanted to help the children," Jörn said, "I was so furious with those accursed dogs."

"You must just do everything in God's name, Jörn, laddie, for His service."

That was beyond Jörn Uhl's comprehension. "To tell you the truth, I only thought of the little mite that was standing in the field screaming like one possessed."

"This time ye did what was right on your own hook, laddie, and that was fine. But if ye want to do what's right and good your whole life long, ye'll have just to shake hands wi' the Almighty, and do it out o' love o' Him. Ye must not do it out o' anger wi' the dogs, or because ye can't bear to see the children's terror, but because God was standing beside ye and looking at ye and sayin', 'Lend a hand, Jörn Uhl,' 'Save the child!' 'Grip thae dogs, Jörn Uhl.'"

"Oh, yes. . . . But it seems to me all one whether I do it with or without God."

"Not by a long way, Jörn. . . . For see here, now: If ye do it on your own responsibility ye'll be proud, and fancy yourself, and become cocked up and perhaps a bit of a fool. Neither will ye always do what's good nor just hit on what's right, neither. And ye won't have any real joy o' what ye've done, because ye haven't done it for His sake, but for your own and other folk's. But if ye put yourself on God's side and do everything for His sake, then ye'll be fine and humble, and ye'll laugh and rejoice and know for certain when ye're doing what's right, and ye'll have understanding for everything, and will be able to defy and to rejoice at the whole world. Our hearts

on God's side, and our hands against the dogs, and against everything bad i' the world; — that's Chreestianity."

"Well, there's some sense in that," said Jörn, "to stand by God and do good; it's not a bad idea, it seems to me; but . . ."

"It's what the Saviour did, always on God's side and always against the dogs. Only that at last there were too many dogs against Him, and they dragged Him down and tore Him to pieces. What else did He try to do all His life long, Jörn, than to be on God's side and fight for the good through thick and thin?"

"That's the thing," Jörn assented, "so to say in league with God."

"For faith and loyalty's sake, Jörn."

"Just so, for faith and loyalty's sake to take sides against everything bad, against dogs and idlers, against drunkards and bad ploughmen."

"Right, laddie, and first of all against one's own shortcomings."

"That's clear," said Jörn Uhl.

"D'ye see?" said the old man. "And bring your packet in to me to-morrow, Jörn, and I'll do it for nothing."

He nodded his head to Jörn several times, and went away limping along the church path, still nodding.

It suddenly occurred to Jörn Uhl: "That's the man you should ask what he thinks about the sermons that are preached in there." He turned around. But the old tailor had settled into a gentle trot and was just disappearing around the end of the churchyard.

When Wieten Klook next morning asked for Jörn's clothes to brush them as usual, he told her how the old man had offered to mend the coat for nothing. . .

"That's a strange customer, yon. What did he have to say?" she asked.

Jörn looked puzzled and was gazing into space. "It was a bit windy at the church corner; if I understood him properly, he said something about the best way to lead one's life being to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for other people."

"He's a queer fish, Jörn. God be with us! the old man is goin' completely daft."

"Why do you say that, Wieten?" said Jörn. "He's hard-working and sober; nobody can say a word to his discredit;

he is always cheerful and kindly, and you know how he made little Dirksen's confirmation suit for him for nothing."

"Yes, but what's the good of all that? The man has never put by a penny for himself. He works the whole day. But has he got any property or anything else to show for it all?" She thrust the bundle into his hands, and said, "And now clear out of this, you and your jacket."

In the corridor he thought: "Now that's three different ways of looking at things. What's preached in church no sensible man can believe in. What the old tailor says has sense in it. But what Wieten says has sense in it, too. The tailor says, Work for others in God's name. Wieten says, Work for yourself in your own name."

But suddenly he stood still, turned around, and returned to the kitchen. She was standing with her back to the door, working. "I say, Wieten," said Jörn, "you make out the tailor talks rubbish. Well, just tell me then how it is about your own case? Here you are, working for nothing from morning to night, in this lonely, dreary house, where three drunkards have everything their own way, and you have to plague yourself with the stubborn girls from morning to night. How does that fit in with your argument?"

She turned around sharply and looked at him with astonishment. He now for the first time spoke like a man who thinks for himself, and this change in him came as such a surprise to her that she could not for the moment realize it. "Laddie," she said, "don't begin prating. Don't fash yoursel' about other folk's business, and don't try to be too knowing."

So he walked away, thinking these matters over to himself.

His outer life was in truth one of continual toil. His father would say: "There's too much of the Thiessens in him, and he'll never be anything better than a hired servant for his brothers." One day ploughing, next day sowing, another working hard at home, that was how his weeks were spent. The first to start work of a morning and the last to stop at night, with never a holiday and hardly a Sunday to himself. His eyes would shut of themselves every evening as soon as supper was over, and he would go to bed early and sleep without a dream.

His figure shot up tall and gaunt, and his walk grew stolid

and heavy from following the plough in the heavy land. His sinews grew strong as iron. It was no trouble to him to go between the handles of his plough with his four horses all day long, turning furrow after furrow without a pause for rest. Although he was not quite eighteen yet, he could at wheat-harvest pitch three sheaves without trouble instead of one, if his fork happened to catch hold of them. His shoulders grew broad, widening out from beneath the armpits as if set up with bastions, and his face grew bronze with the sun and the salt sea breezes. His manner and speech had that slow decisiveness and plod in them which is peculiar to slow and brooding minds. His church-going became less frequent; but every second and third Sunday he still put on his blue, well-fitting suit, and walked silently and proudly, with head upright, to church.

That autumn's events had a good effect upon him. For many a year now he had thought, "Be diligent, sober, thrifty, and follow your nose till you die — that's the whole of the joke, nothing more." But the conversation with the tailor, and the reflections and comparisons that followed it, had made him open his eyes a little, and look at things a little more closely. He discovered all of a sudden that the matter wasn't quite so simple. There were other things that were good to have besides honesty and money. His heart opened out a little, and he became gentler and less harsh.

He conceived a quiet affection for some of the workmen's children from Kamp, and would sometimes of a Sunday afternoon sit with them on the bank of the Au and whittle willow twigs into whistles for them, and help the smallest of them to make chains out of the stems of dandelions. In winter, however, he would keep apples stored away in straw at the bottom of his box, and laugh at the devices of the children to draw his attention by coughing or louder talking when they passed the farm on their way to school, for they didn't venture to make a direct request to him for the fruit. He looked to them so tall and earnest. Sometimes, of a wintry evening, he brought out his Littrow, and looked at the maps of the stars in the appendix, and went out into the apple-garden on starlight nights, seeking out the different stars and noting their names. But when he discovered that he was becoming absorbed, and more greedy for knowledge, and when he noticed how the delight of learning began to go to his head like wine, he drew

back terrified, and put the book away again in the box, right at the very bottom under the straw where the apples lay.

He sealed up and stored away the discoveries he had made about men and things, as the shipman stores away his cargo in the dark hold of the vessel. Jörn's cargo of experiences, too, seemed non-existent, without importance and without a purpose, but it was only hidden away. It had enriched his soul and lay there as part of his wealth, and made the ship sail deeper and safer.

Thus one experience followed the other, one being after another came into his life. They approached him, gave him a portion of their knowledge and experience, and went away again.

CHAPTER XI.

In the following spring, with the astuteness of an older man, he came to the conclusion that it would be best to offer himself for service in the militia without further delay; he would then have a free path before him, after he had served the prescribed time in the army. The general looked with satisfaction at the big, broad-shouldered youth standing naked before him for examination, and asked, good-humoredly, "Horse Guards or Artillery?" Jörn bethought himself a moment, and said, "Artillery." The members of the examining commission were greatly astonished. "Why?" asked the general. "I'm better suited for it." "Why?" asked the general again. A shrewd look came over Jörn's face, and he said, "It seems to me that the Artillery are a more homely sort of men, and more necessary for the country into the bargain." The general nodded approvingly, and dismissed him.

Bailie Eisohn — the same man who used to drink and gamble with the farmers, and whose only child had afterward to go begging and died in poverty — assumed a knowing look, and said, "He's one of the old stock of the Uhls, but he's a poor specimen of them, general. There's no gumption in him." "Nonsense," said the general; "I'll answer for that fellow. I'm a fair judge of faces, Mr. Bailie, and have a very good idea how different people have turned out after all my experience in times of peace and two campaigns."

So that autumn, as soon as the harvest was in, Jörn went to Rendsburg. Geert Dose, the son of old Dose who used to live at Dingerdonn, was told off to the same battery as Jörn, and went with him.

Rendsburg was at that time still a quiet country town. And even had it been as full of life as Hamburg and the finest city in all the land, what would it have mattered to these farmers' sons? What concern had they with the world? As for Jörn,

he was there to learn what was to be learnt, and to obey whatever orders might be given him, for three years. In his spare time he could do what he liked. Then his thoughts flew away home to the fields and the stables of the Uhl.

He made capital headway in his military work. There could not have been a better soldier. He was hardy, shrewd, and obedient. A corporal fresh from the Military School, who was always talking about the "unlicked stockish Holsteiners," would fain have made Jörn Uhl into a footstool for the magnificence of his young authority. But on the fourth or fifth day Lieutenant Hax, whom his men called "Long John," happened to get wind of the corporal's intention, and had a short talk with him, and that was the end of it.

Next day, when Long John was passing through the stables, he met Jörn Uhl carrying two buckets of water. "Uhl, where in the world do you get that long, heavy step of yours? I've never seen such a young fellow with a walk like that all my born days. Looks as if you were carrying heavy iron rails."

Jörn set the buckets down with a clatter and stood there stiff as a poker. "I've had to work hard ever since I was a child," he said.

"Commenced ploughing when you were a two-year-old, eh?"

"Yes, and it's heavy land down there."

"I come from near Itzehoe," said the lieutenant, "know those parts well, and have been in Wentorf, too. Your father has a big farm down there, I fancy?"

"At your service, sir. But *I've* had to work."

"Oh, so the old chap didn't?"

"No."

"Nor your brothers, either? Eh?"

"No."

"You've got such a — what shall I say? — such a grave look on your face, Uhl. Can't understand it in a young fellow like you."

"It'll go ill with the ploughing, down at the Uhl, this autumn," said Jörn.

Lieutenant Hax frowned slightly, but said nothing. From that day forth he treated Jörn with consideration and esteem, and showed it by expecting more work from him than from any other man in the battery, and by always entrusting him with the most difficult tasks.

Jörn's comrades at first showed a certain dislike to him. They had heard that he was the son of a big marsh farmer, and were inclined to take his quiet, reserved way for pride. And, as a matter of fact, he was not without a touch of stolid yeoman's pride. And this feeling of reserve was enhanced at first by a certain coarse tone that prevailed in the mess-room to which he belonged. This was due to the presence of two or three braggart fellows, who had succeeded in getting a name among their comrades as "men of the world" by dint of constant prate about their experiences and adventures. As a village boy and son of a farmer, Jörn was indeed not unacquainted with a great deal of what these two heroes talked about; certain other facts he had already dimly guessed at; and moreover there was a strongly sensuous side to his nature; but all these things lay hid in the most secret depths of his soul, and guarded with most scrupulous conscience. It was intolerable to him, and caused him pain, almost physical, to hear these braggart fellows discussing these holy secrets of nature, amid their bursts of hilarity. And as he listened to their talk, moreover, it became clearer and clearer to him how deeply and hopelessly his brothers at home were enmeshed in passion and licentiousness.

So while such jests were going around, he used to sit there with the same expression on his face as that with which he had listened to his brothers' speeches, and making no concealment of his disgust and contempt.

One evening the two heroes tried to bring him to book for this demeanor. But with the astuteness of one who has all his life had to do with Nature, Jörn had foreseen some such quarrel, and had made sure of getting his old schoolmate Geert Dose to stand by him in case of need. So the two heroes, who had only reckoned on having one opponent to deal with, found themselves confronting two, and got a very sound thrashing. From that time forth, although the mess-room tone remained rough, it lost its downright coarseness.

Jörn's comrades did not like him at first. They mistook the zeal and diligence with which he carried out his work from day to day for toadyism, as if he were merely striving to gain the favor of his superiors. But they soon found out that his zeal was nothing more than simple honesty. They saw that he was thoroughly reliable, and that he was no self-seeker;

and when they heard from Geert Dose what a hard time he had had in his youth, they looked up to him with respect, as young sailors do to the comrade who has made the longest voyage. He became a kind of arbitrator and umpire among them, and many a mother's son of them found in him and his sharp, terse decisions a good helper in times of distress.

"I say, Uhl, have you heard the news? Rückert has bolted, and has been caught again."

"What does the fellow want to bolt for? When a horse is drawing the plough, it mustn't kick; that's clear. What does he want to bolt for, if he's a real soldier? Discipline is discipline."

"Uhl, you're a real sensible chap, but you're a bit too sensible."

Jörn Uhl sucked at his short pipe, and said, "I don't know how it is that I can't laugh like other folk. It seems to me as if my face has been frozen stiff sometime or other, and I can't get it into working order again. But when you others laugh, I like listening to you mightily. Come, tell us a story, one of you. You, Geert, tell us a yarn about Lanky Sott."

"I say . . . you know Plank, don't you . . . he's in his third year now, he's gone and got that little fair-haired girl into trouble — you know, the one in service at the doctor's. She was turned away from there yesterday, and she's been to the canteen wanting to speak with Plank. But he shammed illness and . . . Do you know him, Uhl?"

"He's a lout," said Jörn; "if he's ridden the little mare too deep into the horse-pond, he'll have to get her out again. We mustn't let him have a moment's peace till he confesses he's engaged to her, and invites us to the betrothal. Let's tell him we've clubbed together and are going to shout a cask of beer the night we congratulate him. When he hears that, he'll get an idea of what we think about the matter."

Geert Dose was often the butt of the mess-room jests; it was said he had learnt next to nothing at school, and, besides, he could look as if he were a regular simpleton. But his mother was one of the real, genuine Crays, a daughter of the well-known crook-backed Stoffer Cray.

Stoffer Cray, it must be explained, was not a crook-back by birth. In his youth he had done a lot of smuggling and had often led the coast-guardsmen a dance, by disguising him-

self as a hunchback. At last it happened that one of the coast-guardsmen came by his death down there in the Fens, and folk said that Stoffer Cray had decoyed him there and pushed him into the water. From that time forward he gave up smuggling, and grew into a silent, close-fisted man, and gradually, from being erect and straight as a young ash, he got the carriage and gait of a hunchback. For many a year he was a familiar figure in the villages, as he trotted along by the side of his dogs and their little cart. This old man was Geert Dose's grandfather, and it was from him that Geert had got his quick wits.

He had been in service at the house of a big farmer in the Marsh, a man who was very sleepy, stupid, and inclined to grumble. The youth managed to ingratiate himself with his master through his kind and obliging ways, and had made the most of the farmer's good-will toward him. So he had passed a pleasant time in his service and had played many a merry trick at this dull-witted loon's expense. His comrades would sometimes get him to tell them one or other of these tricks for the general amusement.

He sat on the edge of his straw mattress, cast a glance around the room, and began: "I remember a yarn about a Geest-carl. . . . Do you know what a Geest-carl is? Well, a Geest-carl is a man who, toward winter or so, quits his hungry village up there on the heath and goes down to the marsh and threshes corn for some farmer and comes back home in spring. And with these Geest-carls Farmer Sott was never out of difficulties.

"One day one of them came along, a little gray fellow, as brown and dry and angular as a block of turf, and with a forlorn look in his eyes, like a man that's lost his way in the woods. He kept wagging his head backwards and forwards. 'Ah!' said I to myself, when I saw him, 'there's some fun brewing again.' 'Farmer,' said I, 'just mark my words. We'll have some trouble with that fellow.'

"Well, the gaberlunzie chap went to bed and got up next morning, and as he's sitting eating his porridge and sour buttermilk — we used to have sour buttermilk every morning and evening, sometimes at midday, too — in comes old Sott as it were by chance, and wants to examine him a bit, quite cautiously, so to say, like a dog tackling a porcupine. And by his hanging jaws and wide-staring eyes you could see that he

was ready to expect anything. 'I just thought I'd like to know what's your name and where ye hail from,' he said. As soon as he was asked his name, the man's eyes began travelling all over the room, around and around and up and down. You would have thought his name was a wasp circling around his head and trying to sting him. 'My name?' says he, and his eyes went wildly around the room once more. Farmer Sott bent over the table gaping with astonishment. I sat quite still, enjoying the fun. I put an old two-shilling piece that had gone out of date on the table before me, and said to myself, 'Next Sunday I'll put that in the plate, extra, just for the sake of this joke.'

"Well, what do you think? Sure as a gun the Geest-carl had forgotten his name. He'd had it yesterday, he said, but last night he must have either forgotten it or lost it somewhere. He said that such things often happened to him. I asked whether I hadn't better go and look among the straw where he'd slept, it might be lying there still. I must have been grinning, for of a sudden old Sott leant over the table and caught me a spank that made my head rattle like a pane of glass, and I wasn't long getting out of the room.

"So far everything had gone fine and smooth. The Geest-carl had lost his name and couldn't find it for the life of him, although we all helped him to look for it. He said he had a dim notion that his name was a pretty long one and had something or other to do with eating. More he couldn't remember, said he. We made all sorts of guesses at it, but he shook his head and would have none of them. He said it was quite an odd out-o'-the-way sort of name. Old Sott hit upon the bright idea of sending him to the minister, and the minister was to read him a whole host of names out of the Baptismal Register, and if he heard a name that sounded like his own the gaberlunzie was to nod his head. But he never nodded once. He knew a thing worth two of that. He only kept on turning his eyes up and down as a girl does playing catchers.

"At last he said he believed his name was a pretty long one. If he could only hit upon a part of it, perhaps he'd remember the rest. 'Yes,' said Sott, 'but how's that to be done?' 'Oh,' said the Geest-carl, 'he supposed the best way would be to . . . that is, if Farmer Sott had nothing against it.' 'Of course,' said Sott, with eyes as big as an ox's, he was that curious.

'Well,' said the Geest-carl, 'he knew his name had something to do with eating. So the likeliest way would be for him to get the same food to eat as he dreamed about of nights. At least for a time, by way of a trial. That would be pretty certain to have some connection with his name, and when he had thoroughly dreamt through and eaten through the whole of his name it would be pretty sure to occur to him again.'

"Well, the farmer agreed, and off he started. For six nights the carl dreamt of butter, and got it, too, and ate huge quantities of it. Next he said he had dreamt of still greater piles of butter. The farmer's wife grew angry, but old Sott says it's no good grumbling, we must just get to the bottom of the matter. And for six days the carl ate his fill of butter again for all he was worth. Well, after awhile, what does he do but go and dream of pans of milk. 'What sort of milk?' asks Sott, while the goodwife leans half over the table, glaring at him anxiously. 'Skim-milk?' asked Sott. 'No,' said he, 'the milk I dreamed of had thick cream on it.' So they started on the milk, and we always had a big bowl full of sweet new milk on the table, and all of us took good care to get our share of it. And so the carl ate his way through the winter and throve mightily. Till one day about the middle of March, when everything's just beginning to sprout and get green in the fields, in the evening he got them to pay him the money he'd earned. As soon as he'd got it, off he goes to his room and fetches his things, and a moment or so afterward there he is outside the farmer's window, and says he, 'I've eaten my way through my name,' says he, 'and now I know what it is.' 'What!' sings out old Sott, springing to his feet. 'Yes,' said the carl, 'I mind me of it now. It's John Stoffer Buttermilk.' 'Buttermilk!' screams Sott, 'why didn't ye dream that at once, eh? That would have come a lot cheaper.' 'Yes,' said the carl, with a self-satisfied laugh, and rolling his eyes again as he'd done of before. 'That's always the way with me. I can never dream anything but the separate parts.' Sott puts a good face on the matter. 'Well,' says he, cajolingly, 'just step inside, then, for now you have buttermilk for a week to come.' But the carl gave himself a shake as if he felt a dozen or so cold eels squirming down his back. 'That's just what was the matter, master. The missus always used to set buttermilk before us for meals, and I couldn't stand it three times

a day.' And with that off he went, and we never saw him again. . . . Of course, I had to bear the brunt of it. For as I was going to my room that night, there stood old Sott in the passage, just where it's a bit dark, waiting for me, and makes out that I had hatched the whole plot with the winter-carl, and that he was going to dust my jacket for me; which he did, for it was a quiet spot."

"He hit the right nail on the head," said Jörn, laughing. And the others, too, agreed; saying, "You well deserved all you got, Geert. . . . But this yarn wasn't quite such humbug as some you've told us. At any rate, give us another."

"Oh," said Geert Dose, . . . "if you want to make out that I'm telling lies . . ."

"Geert, you'd better begin straight off, or else look out for yourself. If you haven't been telling lies this time, you've done it often enough before. So look sharp and make a start, unless you want to catch it."

Geert Dose looks at Jörn Uhl, as much as to say: "Jörn, you and I are the only two sensible ones among all these children." But as they are now standing up and threatening him with their fists, he begins again in an injured tone.

"Well. . . . You fellows talk about volunteer Kiekbusch's mighty appetite, but we had a winter-carl at our farm — I mean at Burly Sott's. He thrashed the whole winter there with us. He used to eat at the same table as us at first. But we soon saw that that game wouldn't answer. He used to have everything put away before we caught a glimpse of it. Just as we'd be thinking about pegging in properly, the bacon dish'd be empty. So old Sott said they'd have to take the big boiler for him, for he was determined to give the chap enough to eat, even though he had to mortgage his farm to do it. Well. . . . The big boiler was brought into action, and he really ate himself full out of it. But it took a good time, pretty close on two hours, before he got the pot empty. Think, then . . . what was to be done? Sott comes along to the barn and says, 'I say, Geest-carl, just tell us straight out, how did you manage to eat enough when you were at home, and yet have any time left over for work? We want to do the right thing by you, if we can, if you'll just tell us.' So the Geest-carl opens his mouth and tells them how he had managed it. His wife, it seems, had nailed a broom-handle across the

calves' trough, and then he had to stand close up to the kitchen door and get fed at it.

"'Man,' said the farmer, 'you're not in your right mind. You don't mean to say that's the way they did it? Well, by George, we'll do as much for you, too. We'll do as much for you, see if we don't.' And, sure as a gun, they started it going. Sott says to me, 'Geert,' says he, 'you'll have to do it, you've got a good head on your shoulders, and you'll soon get the hang of it.' 'Of course I will,' says I, 'for I wasn't behind the door when brains were being served out. I'll manage it somehow or other.' And blest if we didn't do it, and brought the fellow through the winter splendid.

"When it was getting on toward spring his wife came to fetch him home, and said her husband had never yet been with such nice people before. 'This time,' said she, 'he's put on fat properly.' She felt him all over, nodding with satisfaction, and cracking up old Sott. He likes to hear that sort o' thing. In summer she said her husband never eats nothing to speak of.

"'What!' cried Sott. 'What's that you say? In summer he don't eat nothing to speak of? Do you mean to say he lives on his own extra fat?' No, the woman says, that wasn't it exactly. But . . . good Lord . . . why, men alive! . . . just imagine it! . . . She actually made out that her husband was, so to say, a kind of animal that chew'd the cud."

"Geert Dose, you're lying," the others yelled. "He's going it a bit too strong; whack him."

But Jörn Uhl laughed, and kept them off. "Leave him alone," he said; "it's all true that he's been telling us, and if it's not true, why do you come listening?"

Geert Dose sat quite quiet, as though it were all no concern of his, and looked quite innocent. He glanced at them all reproachfully, and said at last: "Do you hear? What Jörn Uhl says is always true."

"Well, go on with your yarn; but if you put it on too thick, we'll thump you all the same. So fire away."

"Oh, fire away, you say. It's as easy as falling off a log, according to you. Well, I remember once . . . but if you say it's only humbug . . ."

"That's all right. Now, start again."

"Well . . . I was going to say, when the winter is coming

to an end, it's often a bad matter for the farmers. It's then that they all get more or less strange in their ways, especially the grass-farmers. Some get hot blood, others again freeze. Some will get their attack as early as March, others about the time when the cattle go back to pasture, so to say, about the beginning of May. There are some that, about the time when they get this cranky fit, go off to the asylum for four weeks of their own accord. The doctors in Holstein have special arrangements for them. Well, that was the time o' year when Burly Sott always used to get a kind of frozen, glassy look about him. He looked as lifeless as a dead hedgehog. Well, so much for that.

"Once, about March it was — cold, wet, icy weather, and the whole farm lay waterlogged in fog and wet, and icicles hung from the eaves like fork-handles. It was then, as I was saying, that his wife had a real bad time of it with him. Once he came and stood in the kitchen, talking all sorts of nonsense to her; then gradually his words came slower and slower, till at last he fell over and lay in a heap in the turf-box. And as he was in the way there, the farm-girls scolded, and gave him a stinger now and again with the sole of their wooden clogs. At last they managed to rouse him, and he went out; they were glad to get rid of him. But the strange thing was that he didn't come in again, even when it was dark. We looked for him everywhere, but we couldn't find him. His wife said: 'I'm just curious to see what he's been up to this time.' But I was quite quiet, and thought to myself, He's been and dumped himself down somewhere in the hay, in one of the barns, and hasn't woke yet.

"Well, next morning, when we were all sitting around the porridge, the kitchen-maid says all of a sudden: 'I saw master again last night. He was standing under the eaves of the house, below the icicles, and looked all shiny and slippery.' And when I took a look through the window, sure as anything, I saw long, thick icicles hanging down from the roof. It didn't take me long to put two and two together. So I said to Sott's wife and the others, 'I've got a pretty good idea where to find the farmer. Come along with me.'

"We all went out. And, sure enough, he'd put himself under the spout behind the barn. He'd been looking out over his meadows to see if there were any signs of green sprouting

as yet, and had fallen asleep as he stood there. For he was already so cold and glassy that he didn't notice the water trickling down him and turning to ice on him. And so, little by little, he got coated all over with ice. He was ice from head to foot, face and all, and on his head he had a kind of dunce's cap of ice, stiff and straight, and the point of it reached right up to the roof.

"Well, we broke him off and carried him into the kitchen. It took four men to do it, and the trouble was to get a grip of him anywhere, he was that slippery. We'd no sooner brought him in, than his wife began abusing him. But he made no sign he noticed her, except to give me a wink with his left eye right through the glass — a thing he always did when she scolded and I was by. One of the lads proposed that we should leave him as he was and take him with us to Meldorf Market, and put him on show at so much a head; but the youth only got a sound box on the ear for his pains.

"Well, what was to be done? To make a long story short — we first stood him away in a corner while we finished our meal comfortably in peace. Seeing us eating he got a mighty hungry look into his eyes, and now and again he would put out his tongue and give the ice a lick, and every time he did it his wife let out a screech at him. Then we put the ice-man, as we called him, just as he was, into the big bean-cauldron that hung over the fire. We put him in upside down at first, for his wife wanted to get at him with her slipper, and then gradually we got him melted. But it took a good half-ton of turf. And then we softened him with soda and ammonia."

At that they all fell upon Geert Dose, and Jörn Uhl could not save him; but still he managed to prevent them from carrying the joke too far. After that there was a lull, and the barrack-room became silent. Dose went away to bed, and Jörn fell to thinking. The others talked in a low voice about the day's work that lay behind them.

In the third year, when Jörn had mastered his duties as a soldier and everything went smoothly, he spent a great deal of his spare time in the house of a subordinate municipal officer who was a good ten years older than himself. Both this man and his wife came from the neighborhood of Wentorf, and as a boy he had visited Thiess Thiessen at Haze Farm, and had known Fiete Cray. He was a dapper

little man. His hair was always smooth and his shirt-sleeves snowy white. He was diligent, thorough, sober, and thrifty, and had a few more good qualities besides. He found fault with Thiess Thiessen's management of the farm, and he found fault with the town council that had appointed him for the way it managed municipal affairs. He found fault with Fiete Cray for having been sitting straddle-legs on his little cart the last time he saw him. He found fault with the plans of the government, as well as with the words of the king. He found fault with everything. He praised nobody but himself and — sometimes — his wife, who on rare occasions, and very shyly, ventured to repeat things he'd said. But whenever he praised her, he always added: "It was I called her attention to it, and now she knows what's right."

If the illness from which this very model man was suffering had been contagious, his companionship would have been a dangerous thing for Jörn Uhl. But this is a disease that does not infect others; it has its origin in the nature of some special individual, spends its strength in him, and then perishes with him, to reappear, perchance, in some quite different place, in some other individual. Those who have to do with the sick man listen to his boasting patiently, and then jeer at him as soon as his back is turned. And when one of his convivial acquaintances is tempted, perhaps, by some favorable opportunity, and begins to brag, this disease of his neighbor will all of a sudden occur to him, and he'll shut his mouth and so escape making a fool of himself.

Jörn Uhl was twenty years old. He failed to see how terribly empty and shallow his friend's heart was. He found this everlasting self-praise somewhat obtrusive and tactless, but reconciled himself to it by thinking, "Oh! it's just his way." So he had little to say on his visits there, and indeed seldom got a chance to speak at all. He would sit on the soft, warm sofa and never say a word, smoking and listening, and feeling himself not a little honored that this self-important, smug little man should devote so many words and so much wisdom to his benefit; in short, he felt quite at home in this spick-and-span little household, in this quiet, childless family. But one Sunday afternoon when he called, the dapper little man was lying full length on the sofa, and could not say a word for toothache; so he entreated Jörn to entertain him a little. This

was the first time that Jörn Uhl had talked at any length in that room. He spoke — of what else could he speak? — of the Uhl and his years of labor there, how such and such a field had been improved by his wise cultivation, and how well he had sold these or those head of cattle. He warmed to his subject, and for two hours he held forth, and his theme was Jörn Uhl's life, deeds, and opinions. His host had toothache, and had to listen in silence. The wife busied herself anxiously about the room, and seemed very worried about her patient.

When Jörn Uhl came again next day to hear how his friend was getting on — he had also, it must be confessed, rather enjoyed talking about himself — the mistress of the house took him mysteriously aside into the kitchen, and tearfully told him that after he had gone yesterday her husband had fallen into a rage and had even struck her, for he couldn't bear to hear a man talk about himself, and he wished to have nothing more to do with Jörn Uhl of Wentorf.

Often enough in his life has Jörn Uhl had to pull a long face — and it was a thing he could easily do, for his face was pretty long already; but never was it longer than when the polished door-handle of his Holsteiner friend banged behind him and he went down those scrupulously clean steps for the last time. This experience, too, he stored away with his others, and said nothing about it. Not until long afterward, twenty years or so, when his character had been thoroughly purged and he had come near to truth and to a genuine knowledge of himself, did he laughingly confess and tell his wife the story. And she managed to make a weapon out of it which she would on occasions use against him. "What was that story you told me, Jörn? Both of you were so smug and perfect, weren't you? Jörn, you're blushing! And well you may, too."

Only once did he let his comrades talk him into going to a dance with them. He watched them as they went whirling around so bravely, and took pleasure in looking at some of the girls who danced well. One of them, a tall, lithe, strong girl, particularly took his fancy, and he followed her with his eyes. The girl soon noticed that his eyes were on her, and, nothing loth, took one of her acquaintances by the arm and walked past him, looking at him. But as he made no overtures to dance with her, she left the long, stiff fellow standing where he was and went away to the others. He then left the room and

went and had a smoke, sitting at the window with the stern face of a righteous man, thinking of the day when he should return home, and how everything would look down there at the Uhl; picturing to himself how he would get everything in order again, and wondering at his comrades, that they should have nothing in life to be anxious about and no definite aim. And when they said to him, " It's not right of you to sit there like a hermit. You're just as young as we are," he couldn't help adopting a rather mysterious air, and hinting that he had much to think of.

It was quite right and proper that Private Jürgen Uhl should not go with the crowd in his young years, but that he should follow well-considered paths of his own. But for him to look upon his youth as dead, and pull this long, righteous face to celebrate its funeral, and wear a countenance as though he were the very quintessence of prudence and foresight, why, that was simply laughable. Look out, Jörn Uhl! Youth will revenge itself on you. Up with you! Don't let Jörn Uhl turn out a mere fool. It's better to be a sinner and sin downright than to be a pattern of such long-faced righteousness.

CHAPTER XII.

In those last weeks of his service as a conscript, he had felt a specially strong longing to be home on the farm again among the barns and hay-ricks and stables, and had gone over all the cattle affectionately in his mind, wondering whether they'd still be there, and over all the farm implements that he'd handled when he was there, and which had grown so familiar to him. He wheedled and hoodwinked himself into a belief in the hope that a good time was coming, that his father would now be older and his brothers more reasonable, and that he himself would have a greater share in the management. He pictured to himself how he would sit so cosily together with Elsbe and Wieten in their room of an evening. They would make a nice happy trio, he thought.

Unseen and unexpected, he returned to his little bedroom by the apple-trees; he opened his box and hauled out his blue linen jumper and trousers, and cast a glance into Littrow's "Knowledge of the Heavens."

Then he turned around and gazed in wonder at his sister, who was standing close behind him. "Why, Sissy," he said, "you haven't grown much taller, but you've got round and plump, and have turned out a fine and bonnie girl, just as I thought you would."

But she had a dissatisfied, almost bitter, look on her face. To his inquiries as to how she spent her time, and what friends she had, she gave curt and ill-humored replies. In looks, she was like a young, full, and fruitful morning in May, but her demeanor was moody like that of one who has long had to put up with harshness and injustice.

Jörn Uhl was much too clever to have any doubts about his own judgment, or to discreetly and unassumingly look into what was going on in his sister's heart; he imagined in his self-sufficiency that he would soon set her to rights again. He

thought that she was too lonely, and that his presence would make all the difference to her. He said so to Wieten, and she seemed to agree with him. But as he was leaving the kitchen she gazed after him with an expression that hardly bore witness to much respect for his judgment.

After he had been back home for about a fortnight, it happened one evening that Hinnerk and Hans had invited some young people to spend the evening with them. Jörn was sitting in the little back room with Elsbe and Wieten, and all conversation seemed to flag. Suddenly Harro Heinsen came in and joined them. He had been serving as a soldier with the Uhlans in Berlin, and had got through a lot of money. He came, as he said, to see Jürgen. "I just wanted to say 'Good day' to you. We've done with playing soldiers now, and got it over. Won't you come into the front room with us a bit?"

Jörn shook his head and remained sitting where he was, wrapping himself in clouds of smoke from his pipe.

So Harro Heinsen sat down and began talking and bragging about his soldier's experiences; and Jörn, who mentally disagreed with everything the ex-Uhlan said, uttered not a syllable. Presently Heinsen asked Elsbe, whom he kept gazing at with his handsome eyes, whether she wouldn't come into the front room with them for awhile. She ought to, he said; for, if she came, some other girls who were sitting outside would come, too. Elsbe sat there as though she were made of stone. Then she looked at her brother, but he was biting his lips, and showing but too clearly that he was not equal to the situation. Then, with sudden resolution, she put her sewing together, and went with him. As they crossed the threshold they heard the sound of boisterous girls' voices from the front of the house. It was already late, and a dark night in November.

Jörn paced up and down the room, now and again looking over toward Wieten; but she, with inscrutable face, was buried in her work, and said not a word. In those two hours he had a new and great experience, and learnt what it means to be in bitter anxiety for one whom one loves.

At last he went over to his little bedroom, and wandered up and down awhile, and then stood by the window, looking out into the dark. He bitterly accused God and the whole world that everything that belonged to this house was fated to be dragged in the dirt, irrevocably. It tortured him to think that

he had not independence and pluck enough to step into the midst of that company and say, "Give me my sister!" He upbraided himself, saying he would never be a man. "I shall always be a mere looker-on," he said, "and do my work in the fields and stables, and be used as an underling as long as I live, just as my father said I would."

While he was still in the midst of these gloomy thoughts, the door that led to the back of the house was flung open of a sudden, and drunken shouts were heard. The door shut again, and then swift, light footsteps approached the dark hall. He opened his bedroom door. His sister almost fell into his arms, and her breath came in little gasps. "I've run away from him," she said.

"If you behave like this, sister," he said, "there'll be no good come of it. How can you be such a madcap?"

"I've just had about enough of it," she said, and went to the old chest by the window and sat dangling her legs from it, just as she had done so often as a child.

"Let me tell you something, Elsbe. It won't be ten years before the Heinsens'll be hunted, bag and baggage, from their farms, and'll be selling hay and chaff in Hamburg. You can take my word for it."

She slid down from the chest and peeped out of the window. "I just wonder whether he's looking for me. Why aren't you in bed yet, Jörn? I told him I was going to run away to you, but I thought you'd be in bed and have your door shut. Then I should have run to the barn. I was in *such* a fright."

He stood in the middle of the room. "I couldn't go to bed. I couldn't help thinking about what you were doing all this time."

"What do you suppose I'd be doing?"

"Hitherto you've always done what I've asked you, Elsbe."

She darted a hasty look at him. "My dear old wiseacre of a brother, what good is that to me?" She laughed. Then she looked out of the window again. "Strange that he's not after me. I'll just give a look out of the kitchen door. He must have thought I'd run around by the garden. So just go to bed, Jörn. Happy dreams."

She was off again before he could say a word. The rain began to patter afresh against the dark window-panes. Out of the depths of the night there came the dark, huge rustle of

the poplars; and as he listened to these sounds of the darkness, they soothed his soul, and for awhile he surrendered himself to them heart and will.

But as he was still walking up and down his room in this weak and nerveless brooding, there came a sound from outside through the rain, like a bird shyly trying its first notes in March. He clearly recognized his sister's voice. At the same instant, as with a great bound, he was out of his dreams; he clenched his hands in his rage. There was a short struggle with the irresoluteness of youth and with the shyness which long years of ill-treatment in his father's house had forced upon him. In an instant, in this outburst of rage, the man in him was born. It was like a young, well-bred horse that stands on the edge of a forest with hanging head, lost in dreams, till the sudden ring of an axe in the depths of the forest startles it, and it is suddenly all eye and life.

He tore the door open, and rushed into the kitchen and looked out into the darkness. He caught sight of his sister standing near the willows in close embrace with Harro Heinsen. He laid his hand on her shoulder, and in a stern, authoritative voice bade her go indoors. "For *you*," said he, "*I'm* responsible."

For an instant she was inclined to defy him, but finally she obeyed, and went with him. Harro Heinsen turned away with a forced laugh and went back into the front room. Jörn Uhl had led his sister in by the hand, as he had often done when he was still a boy, and left her standing in the middle of his room. He strode up and down the room, and as he looked at her, he observed her beauty and the delicacy of her limbs, which in spite of their smallness and plumpness were of a light and graceful build, and made her appear taller than many a girl of the same stature. She looked what she really was — a woman in the first blush of her beauty. In her demeanor, as well as in her brown eyes and in her cheeks, he plainly saw the unconcealed glow of passion.

"What's the meaning of all this?" he said.

"I must have some one to love," she answered, defiantly.

"There's no hurry about that. Other suitors will come, who at least will be able to give you bread."

"Tush! Bread! Is that what you asked for, when you wanted to go off with the Sand-lass? Was it for the sake of

bread that you wanted to go with her? I tell you it's wearisome sitting here in this big, dreary house, year after year, where one sees nothing but green willows and drunken brothers. Or, perhaps, you think I ought to rust and pine away to death?"

"God forbid!" said he. "What misery is this! You're going to ruin, and I shall be left quite alone."

"But if I will it, who's to stop me? I suppose my will is my own? I don't make you responsible."

Then his fury mastered him, and he gnashed his teeth. "I will not have it, I tell you. To-morrow I'll take you out of this. You shall go to Thiess Thiessen's. He's your mother's only brother. Afterward, I'll see that you get a proper situation in some respectable family, many a mile away from here, so that you may forget all about Harro Heinsen. . . . Do you hear, girl? I swear I'll make you hear me. I'm determined that you sha'n't take one of these topers for a husband, but you shall have a man of my sort — one who can, and will, work. Let father and brothers say what they like, in this I'll put up with no interference."

"I don't want to! I will have him. Rather a single day with him than ten years with one like you."

But when she had said that, she threw herself on the chair, hiding her face in her hands on the table, and said, in the midst of her sobs, "This all comes of having no mother. Mother! mother! Oh, what am I to do? If I love him so, is that my fault? But I know — I know it'll turn out bad, and that I'll have to rue it all my days."

While she was weeping and crying out in this way, Jörn stood there gazing gloomily out into the night, and could answer her nothing. He waited till she had wept herself quieter, and then took her by the hand and led her to her room, where Wieten Klook already lay fast asleep.

Next morning, while day was still breaking, he went to the sitting-room, which he never entered on other occasions, sat down at his father's desk, and wrote a letter to Thiess Thiessen. Whatever might be said against the style and writing thereof, the spirit that prompted it was good:

"DEAR THIESS: — This is to let you know that I am sending Elsbe to you this afternoon, for I don't want her to go to the bad. She ought to marry a proper sort of man; it's all the

same what he is, even a farm-laborer'll do, if he's honest. I was going to keep watch over her myself, like a dog over a hen-roost, but the nights are long and dark, and I sleep sound. And her time is come. You know how it is on a farm when May-day comes around — the whole stable is restless; so it's better for me to take her off to another pasture, and you'll have to look after her; keep your eyes open. Let her sleep in the room next to yours, or even in your own room. You could put the bed under Africa. JÜRGEN UHL."

He sent the stable-boy on horseback over to the Haze with this letter. But toward afternoon, when the others had left the farm to go to the horse-fair in the village, or, in other words, to use the horse-fair as an excuse for sitting in the public-house, he thought he'd have time to take her over himself.

So he put the two heavy bays into the old-fashioned basket-cart, which his mother had used in times gone by when she was a girl and had had to drive into town for lessons. He and Elsbe now drove through the village, on their way to Thiess Thiessen's, and he noticed in the good-humored laughter with which his sister greeted him an expression of strangely blended good-will and derision.

As they drove past the inn, the Uhls and the Heinsens and many others were sitting there, and old Dominie Peters, who had some savings-bank business to discuss, was standing outside near the open window. Looking up from their cards the players caught sight of the vehicle, and immediately there was an outburst of questions and laughter.

"Why, there's Jörn there. That's a sight for sore eyes! Gad! he's an old-fashioned customer, this son of yours, Uhl."

Old Uhl stood up, red in the face, and in his embarrassment, could think of nothing better to do than to come to the open window and jeer at his own children.

His son heard his words, and knew the tone as well as the face that accompanied them, but steadfastly kept his eyes from looking in his father's direction. He sat motionless, stooping forward a little, and flicking leisurely with his whip at the broad backs of the horses. He heard his father shout some rude jest into the room, and heard the loud laughter that followed. Then they got out of hearing.

"See, Elsbe," he said, "that's what our father's come to.

He was afraid lest they should laugh at him, so he turned and pointed his finger at us; he encouraged these people to laugh at us, Elsbe, his two youngest children. So you can see what sort of a father we have."

And in his anger he uttered an oath, and swore that no matter how wretched his father might come to be, no matter how much he might need his son's help, that he would not lift a finger for him.

It all turned out very differently afterward, however, as we shall see.

He had now, as he thought, placed his sister in safe-keeping, and found himself back as head-servant at the Uhl. It was not long before he saw that the Uhl, as well as other farms in the neighborhood, was in a bad way, and he was sure that the end could not be much longer postponed.

There were certain signs that people had noticed, and certain reports and rumors afloat excited folk's minds to the utmost. There was a general feeling of unrest in the air, as in a heavy thunder-storm, when people have seen the lightning strike, and are standing waiting to see the " red bird " fly up from the roof.

A man in uniform visited some of the farms, and everybody was asking who he was. No one had ever seen this man and this uniform before. And when a certain shrewd fellow guessed that he could be no other than a bailiff, and when it was known that Junge Siek had said in a drunken fit that he would have to leave his beautiful farm, and that it cut him to the heart to do it, for the sake of his children, the news spread like wild-fire, and all the village laborers and artisans stood waiting on their doorsteps beneath the leafless lindens that dark, cloudy November day, and there were lights in the village windows till late at night. That same day, Alick, Uhl's eldest son, drove up to the farm with his wife and his three children. They had an elegant buggy, and his wife, who in her girlhood had attended a ladies' college in Hamburg, was wearing a big evening cloak lined with some dark fur. She wished Jörn " Good day " with a grand air, and marched into the house. Alick followed more quietly, while Jörn unharnessed the horses and returned to his work. About an hour afterward, however, he had to go into the house to ask his father about some business or other, and found his brother standing in the middle of the

room gesticulating wildly, in great excitement. He was dressed and ready to go, and he had his greatcoat and fur cap on, and his whip in his hand. Jörn heard him shouting angrily at his father: "What have you taught us? Just tell me — what have you taught us? To keep our heads high, to walk smartly, spend plenty of money, and run after the girls. All very good things in their way, only your purse wasn't long enough for it. Your purse wasn't half as long as you wanted to make out. The whole thing's a swindle — your eternal laughter and your bank-account, and your silver-mounted harness, and the big family vault, and mother's coffin with the velvet pall on it. It was all a swindle, I say! You're much too big for your boots! You and the whole set that guzzle with you, you're nothing but a pack of rogues and swindlers. And it's your sons who have to pay for your folly."

Klaus Uhl, his father, sat in the corner of the sofa, gazing helplessly before him; and his youngest son, who stood transfixed on the threshold, now for the first time saw that his father could look grave and even frightened, and that he was an elderly man of unhealthy appearance.

"If mother had lived, there'd have been at least one sensible person on the farm; but we stupid fools used to despise her. Ah, mother! Why, she was the good angel in the house, but as for you, you have dragged everything in the dirt. I can see what's coming. We'll have to leave our farms in the same state as Hans Meyer had to leave his. He had to go away with a bag of wheat on a wheelbarrow, and his child walked at his side with half a loaf of bread. Such things don't happen in a natural way. The devil's had a hand in it."

He was turning to go, when he saw his youngest brother standing behind him. "Ah," said he, "you're a sly fox," and he slapped him hard on the shoulder. "In spite of your one and twenty years, you've got more sense than that fellow there with his sixty. We have wrapped everything in silk, and poured wine over it till we no longer knew what we had in our hands. But you can see things as they really are. You needn't pull such a shy face, man. Think of me, Provost, when thou comest into thy kingdom. You've got the stuff in you to find one. It won't be the Uhl, though. That fellow there has squandered it in drink."

This was the fashion in which Klaus Uhl's eldest son took

leave of his father's proud roof. It was a farm more valuable than many a nobleman's estate. Afterward, when he was an elderly man and used to drive down from Ringelshörn to the distant Fens in his miserable little cart for seaweed, he always sat in such a position as to avoid seeing the Uhl, which lay so broad and safe down there beneath its mighty poplars, whose heads had been bent toward the east by the everlasting breezes from the sea.

Many other farmers, too, were ruined at this time. Care thundered with heavy hand against the doors of the firm-set old farmhouses, and their inmates paced up and down in the long, dark halls, refusing to open their doors. And inside, in the little rooms, there were women sitting and weeping, and children full of heavy, nameless forebodings.

On one farm the wife herself put the brown horses into the cart, and put on the silver-mounted harness, and drove into town and asked the magistrates for a declaration of her husband's incapacity. She spread out before them the documents which she had brought with her, and showed how much of her own marriage dowry he had squandered. She placed the little lad she had with her on the green table, drew down his trousers, and showed the bruises her drunken husband had made, and she bared her full, white bosom and showed the marks of his fingers, and demanded that she should be made administrator of the property.

The magistrate was a young man, and though he had stood by many a woman's side, he had never yet stood face to face with one. He made a motion toward the bell, and said it wasn't such an easy matter, according to law, to do what she wanted; and then he began to recount the various steps it would be necessary to take. They were many and intricate.

Then she began to say hard things about the law of her native land, maintaining that it was as clumsy as an old cow, and that it was as much a woman-hater as a hardened old bachelor. Her words rang right through the office into the corridor. And at last she said there was, thank God, another sort of justice, which she would in future put into application. And she raised her hand threateningly to illustrate her meaning. She would find a way out of her distress without magistrates and law-courts — a cheaper way, too, faith. But if it should happen that her husband should some fine day find his

way hither to complain of *her,* then they'd better send him back about his business; else she'd give him such a drubbing that he wouldn't be able to stir a step for a fortnight.

In this way did this wretched woman speak, made desperate by her long years of misery, and then drove unmolested home again. Many a time afterward folks saw her driving through the village, always with two smart horses. She had sold the silver-mounted harness next day; her horses pull in good strong hempen trappings up to the present day, and she looks neither to left nor right. She has become a hard woman. The farm-servants and produce-dealers are afraid of her; her children have turned out well — the boys a little shy, and the girls strong-willed women. Her husband shuffled out of life one day after sneaking along the walls of his own house for many a year. He lies buried in a neglected grave, near that of one of his workmen, old Peter Back, which is always kept fresh and neat. It is said that the wife of one of his sons once quietly tidied up the farmer's grave, but the widow found it out, and got seeds of stinging nettles from a weed plot near, and sowed them on it. And what made this more remarkable was the story that older folk of the village told how, long ago on her wedding-day, she had not been able to contain herself for happiness, and how, after their mutual "Yes" had been exchanged, she had thrown her arms around her young husband's neck, laughing and weeping at the same time, without caring a jot for the people who were there. Out of love so warm there had come such bitter hate.

That winter, too, William Ironsides drove through the village in his chaise cart for the last time. His family dwelt at the crossroads, opposite the new churchyard, on the high, proud Wurth. Wurth is the name given in those districts to the ancient mounds on the remnants of early settlement and civilization. According to the church rolls, the Ironsides have lived there for the last four hundred years and more. The three-cornered ploughshare, from which they got their name, still hangs as a sign over the door of their house and on the family pew at church. One evening, just before Christmas, Farmer Ironsides' brother, who was a well-known surgeon in Hamburg, came on a visit to him. His friend, the county chairman, had written to him, saying that if he wished to give his brother a word of timely warning it was high time that he should do so.

He came, and after taking great pains to learn the real state of affairs, was soon convinced that he had come too late. Once a year it had been his great delight to get away from the narrow confinement of the big city and revel in the fields and marshes around his native village. He loved to recall his happy boyhood there, and to revisit all the old rooms and barns, and every meadow and orchard. That evening he went over the farm for the last time, looking into every ditch, and into the branches of every ash-tree, and at last he came to the old house, and laid his head against the door-post and wept.

And then there was Stark Behrens, who had always been so much cleverer than everybody else. He also had now to come down from his cart and go the rest of life's journey on foot. His children were already grown up and his hair was gray. For five and thirty years he had dwelt on his beautiful farm, and had always talked like a shrewd fellow, and had liked giving every one advice, and had lamented the general lack of common sense in all the farmers around about. "Farm management?" he used to say. "Nonsense! Any one can manage a farm. But it takes a smart man to grow rich at it." The whole country around believed his boasting. There were not three men who did not believe it. The general opinion was that Farmer Behrens was a sly fox. But now it came out that in all those five and thirty years he had never from first to last known the amount of his debts or assets, and had not the faintest idea whether they were increasing or diminishing. He had been not a fox but an ass. His accounts were as tangled as a girl's hair when mischievous lads have pelted her with burrs. He had to give up his farm, and went to each of his seven children, whom he had made poor and ridiculous. He went from house to house in turn, and they each refused to take him in. At last he found an odd corner to sit and die in at the house of his old sister in town, whose husband had some small government post there.

And Jan Wieck, who had for many years been overseer of the dikes, had also to leave his farm and go to Hamburg, whither his three sons had gone before him. There he sat all day long in a dirty little room which opened on to the yard, and received a crust from his children, which they salted for him with jeers and bitter words. Of an evening he used to go and earn a few pence for a drink by setting up the

pins for the players in a skittle alley. Every Monday, however, he used to put on his long, yellow, shabby oilskin, which he had once worn in the days of his glory as dike overseer, and go to the cattle-market; there he would talk with the country-folk from his district who had come to market, and would laugh and talk, loudly and shrewdly enough, and say how he liked being in Hamburg, and what a pleasant life he was leading there. And then he would accompany these Wentorfers to the railway station and wave them good-by, and return to his sunless, desolate room and beat his head and weep, crying: "Oh, if only I could sit just for once again beneath the spreading lindens on my beautiful old farm! Just for once again! How I would work and strive and save, and I would never let a single drop pass my lips again as long as I lived."

And it came to Klaus Uhl's turn. When he passed through the village there was no outward sign of the distress he was in. He was never more arrogant toward poor folk than in those last days at the Uhl, when he no longer owned either stick or stone upon it. He still had that soft, roguish smile about his lips, and when he drove through the village with his spick-and-span vehicle, stared at by the crowds of children and villagers, he still wore his dignified look. He was crushed beneath the weight of his own importance, like the king's fool when he drives to court through the gaping mob.

And Hinnerk and Hans Uhl and other young people came driving through the village toward morning. They came from the fairs and dancing-booths. Their horses were tired and ill-tempered, and their zigzag course made the carts jolt; some of the drivers were sleepy, others were growling drowsily at the horses.

That evening the laborers and artisans had plenty to talk about. The younger ones said airily, "The earth revolves, so of course men cannot but slip and fall. Some slide down off the Wurths, others slide up on to them. Why have they been living like savages?" The old men spoke about the fathers and grandfathers of the ruined farmers. How hard-working, simple, upright, and stern they had been. But they also tried to bring heavy sins home to their ancestors, sins which, they said, though unrevenged till now, were at last being visited on the children. They remembered cases of cruel severity

or of cunning and unscrupulous legacy-hunting, and of swift, violent deeds. Many who saw how these old farmer families were dazzled by pride — how they were wilfully ruining themselves, had the feeling that these men were doomed to perish, and had, against their will, to obey some pitiless predestination. A nameless fear came upon many, as though some superhuman and terrible power were stalking unseen along the streets and roads, touching sane men, and unhinging their minds. Jörn Uhl, even before he had gone into the army, had been wont to stand aside and view all these wild doings from a distance, just as a worker in some clay-field by the wayside might see mad horses careering past along the road and then bend over his spade again. But Jörn had not knowledge and insight enough in those days. Sometimes he had in secret condemned the wild life of these men and foreseen their evil end; but at other times again, he had had doubts whether his judgment was right. But in the course of years his mind had grown maturer and clearer. He now stood on his own feet and calmly regarded them. "There they go rollicking on in their wild career, and now they fall into the pit." And a dim consciousness in him said, "Your path, Jörn Uhl, has by Fate's dispensation been different from theirs, so far, and shall by your own will always continue to be different. Nothing in life schools character like the sight of our fellow mortals' destiny."

CHAPTER XIII.

JÖRN UHL was now doubly lonely. First, because his father and brothers, as well as his comrades of his own age and standing, all went other ways; secondly, because in his inmost soul there was a great and beautiful chamber, a temple of religion. He longed to furnish out this chamber or temple, for it was empty, and to celebrate high festivals there. But he did not know how to set about it. There was nobody there who could point out his way to him.

It happened one afternoon that everybody had left the house and gone to Meldorf Fair except Wieten, who was sitting sewing by the window. Toward evening, when the twilight was dim in the room, he went along the passage just in that frame of mind when thoughts have no point to them, but lie in a great, endless level, like the far and wide and endless marsh-land — but it is fertile soil. As he went through the long, high hall toward the open door, he saw the moonlight lying like a carpet of Orient gold and silver along the floor. Looking out, he saw the moon, which was now in her third quarter, rising slowly over Ringelshörn, spreading all her golden glory over the earth and over the heath and the oak copses by the Goldsoot.

Jörn Uhl stood gazing at the wonder, and his drowsing thoughts raised themselves slowly and stiffly, like a man that has been asleep hundreds of years, and became alert. "Mare Nubium," he said to himself, and a roguish look flitted over his face, as when a man, after long years of separation, discovers in some friend the oddities he knew in him when he was a boy. After he had looked at the moon awhile, he turned around meditatively and went to his room. From the bottom of his old chest he brought forth a long, much-dinted spy-glass. He had purchased it in some second-hand shop at Rendsburg in the first year of his service as a soldier. He came back

to the doorway and looked at the moon; and all the merry elves and spirits that saw him standing there in his short, blue linen jumper; all the house spirits of the Uhl who ride on the rafters, and the troop that squats at midnight on the roof-ridge and swings on the poplar twigs; and all those eerie, crouching forms on the old heath that are midway between man and beast in body and soul; all these far-seeing, lubberly, inert, dreamy creatures, and everything else in the country around of the species that fleer at astronomy and every other science, and are kith and kin with Nature, sucking and smatching at her breasts, and feeding there with laughter and throes of pain and tears; — all these strange beings now rejoiced over Jörn Uhl.

"Good luck, good luck to him, he's got his love again."

Jörn Uhl gazed up at the moon and called the different seas by their names, and knew the mountain ranges, and felt happy at remembering all their titles. And suddenly, while he was watching intently, the telescope revealed to him clearly for the first time the different craters. He uttered a low cry as he saw the clear gleam that the old book he had in the chest spoke of. He saw up there in the blue sky how the mountain-peaks around the "Mare Nectar" were aglow in the morning sun. For a long time he stood watching; and gradually, in order to get the full flavor of this delight, his thoughts wandered into strange, solitary places and communed with themselves, thinking how different he was from the other young fellows who were now drinking at Meldorf Fair and running after the girls. He, on the contrary, had been ploughing all day, and now it was night he was looking at the moon and studying the truths of science.

All the while that Jörn Uhl's thoughts were away on such high and breakneck paths, all around him the air, the trees, and the heathy slopes were full of life, and he neither knew nor saw it. Up there, not far from the Goldsoot, in the direction in which Jörn had turned his spy-glass, in a little hollow surrounded by bracken and protected from the west wind, there were lying on the old bed of last year's oak leaves, seven Children of the Heath, side by side — a beautiful brood, brown-skinned and always young, with long, dark, smooth hair and with eyes unfathomably deep, which, according to mortals' judgment, have something dull and glassy in their gleam, and

eyelashes too long and silky. Whoever has seen them knows it is true. They were telling one another about the laughing-eyed maidens they had seen passing by that afternoon along the heath track on their way to market; and then they came to speak of Elsbe Uhl. For they liked talking of Elsbe Uhl, because she was like them and akin to them in this, that she was weak of will and gave herself up to the present and took love for her right. The seven had seen how Harro Heinsen a few nights ago came riding straight across the heath on his brown mare, and how he had tied her to the silver birch that stood by the Haze Farm, beneath Thiess Thiessen's window, and how Thiess Thiessen had slept and heard no sound, not a rustle, and they knew how little Elsbe was to meet Harro Heinsen to-day at the Fair; and they said:

"To-night she'll come this way, and to-night she'll fall into his hands here by the Goldsoot."

And that is why they had come together, and as they thought of it and talked it over their faces did not change. They remained long-lashed and drowsy-looking, indifferent and pensive as before. Thus they lay there, then, and waited, for they, the frank, free children of Nature, liked to see Nature's strength in the passions of mortals.

They passed their time by telling stories of old things and new: of that old, dirty, greedy farmer who, thirty years ago, had come with spade and crowbar, and had attempted with rude, false words to rob the Goldsoot of its treasure. They had frightened the fellow away. With wild, brown bodies erect, and eyes like the expiring glow of coals, they had suddenly appeared above the edge of the valley, and made him rush away screaming with terror. On the third day, after wildest visions, he was dead. And they spoke, too, of a pretty lad who, one cold April night, six years ago, had gone down into the pool, and had since vanished away into foreign lands. And they thought how again to-night they were going to cast their wonted spell over a man now on his way thither — a spell that should make him throw caution and prudence and the last vestige of self-restraint to the winds, and let the nature that was in him have its way.

And when evening was past and the night was come and they were still talking over what was to happen and how it was to be brought about, — for this race is fickle and limp in

will, heavy-handed and sweeping in execution, dreams are its strength and sorrows its delight, — two young people came in sight, walking hand in hand down the track to the Goldsoot, which shimmered white in the moonlight. On their young faces lay that sacred, earnest joy which lights up the human countenance when everything good has been aroused in the soul and summoned to action. All the most beautiful and hallowed things within them, mutual trust and love and goodwill, beamed from their fresh, innocent faces, and in their eyes there was a glitter as of golden weapons to fight against everything evil.

About twenty years ago, soon after the surrender of the Schleswig-Holstein troops, a family of Wentorf Crays had emigrated to South Africa, and had later on joined a troop of trekking Boers, among whom were several Germans, and had settled down on the Crocodile River. There they had thatched their little stone hut with long grass, and, after the fashion of the Boers, had attained to a modest competence and a somewhat drowsy prosperity. They had taken several children with them from Wentorf, but only one son and one daughter had survived. The daughter was married to a young Dutchman; the son was still unmarried. For a Cray he was somewhat grave by nature, and seemed unable to make up his mind to take a Dutch wife. He used to say to his parents when they pressed him to marry, " I was too old when I left home. I was ten, then. And now I can't accustom myself to these foreign girls. If I found a lass who spoke my own language I might venture it."

After carefully talking over this difficult matter between themselves, his parents one day proposed to him that he should take a trip home to Holstein and look at his cousins there, and afterward, if none of them pleased him, cast his eye on the other young people of Wentorf, and marry the girl he chose right off, and bring her back with him. He agreed, after his mother had smilingly shaken her finger at him, for she had hatched this plot. So he came back home, after almost twenty years, on a similar errand to that of Father Jacob of old, who also went in search of a wife.

He came to St. Mariendonn, went from house to house, delivered his kind messages from home, was asked many a

question, and told frankly and willingly everything he knew of that unknown land and of his parents' circumstances, and at last revealed the aim of his long journey. But this revelation made his position unpleasant, and it became very difficult for him to carry out his intention, for now everybody looked upon him as a suitor. Some parents, fearing he might, by his good looks, persuade one or other of their marriageable daughters to go with him, treated him coldly. Those who were better off among his kinsmen got the idea into their heads that this stranger was aiming at their money-bags, in order to repair his own straitened and desperate circumstances. Some who were more venturesome or had more confidence in him, or who had daughters already on the shelf, made clumsy attempts to bring the young people together, attempts that were painful to both parties concerned. At last, to cap matters, two old people came, wishing to turn an honest penny, and declared themselves ready to provide him with a girl with a certain dowry. The young man felt so disgusted at these experiences that he lost heart and determined to give up his plan, and to go home by the next ship sailing for the Cape.

Just at this point, a rogue, who heartily wished him success in his search, told him about the Fair which was to be held next day in Meldorf, and would be visited by all the daughters of the neighborhood. This philanthropist was a student of theology, an artisan's son from the neighboring marsh-lands. As a free-hearted fellow and a son of the people and destined to stand among the people all his life, he continued his friendship and intercourse with his comrades of the board school, and trod with them the well-known paths that young folk love. Although he had passed many a merry night in that company, and had ridden many a night to dances on a horse borrowed from some farmer, and although he had looked into the laughing eyes of many a maiden, he never, wondrous to relate, became a disgrace to his cloth.

Although discouraged and rendered almost shy, now that the reason of his presence had become a matter of notoriety, he nevertheless resolved to make this last attempt, even while looking upon it as hopeless. For how could a girl, after hardly six days' acquaintance with a complete stranger like him, make up her mind to bear him company to a land that must dismay her, both with its remoteness and its wildness? But still he

would have liked, if possible, to gratify his parents by bringing a wife home with him, as he had promised to do; and besides he now had a longing for married life.

Now there was a girl come to this dance, who was tall and fair and of a simple, homely beauty, a girl of Frisian blood, not much over twenty years of age. She was the daughter of a country schoolmaster thereabouts, a man who had many children; she had now for several years had a place in a wealthy marsh-farmer's family in St. Mariendonn, where she had to help the farmer's wife. She had plenty to do and got very little for it. She was of a meditative and sympathetic temperament, and with all sorts of thoughts of her own in her head; and these thoughts became so much the more retiring and shy as she had no one to whom she could utter them.

She had not intended to go to the Fair this time. But as her mistress had told her somewhat disdainfully that she ought to remain at home, she would hardly be asked to dance, not being a farmer's daughter, a certain spirit of defiance rose in her, and all sorts of strange hopes flitted before her imagination, called into being by her mistress's arrogance. So she made up her mind to go to the Fair, and, coming thither, went into the big dancing-room, and everything seemed like a dream.

At first no one asked her to dance, and she sat there with grave and tranquil face, like the midnight sky when it is veiled with filmy mists — only a few bright points shine through here and there with a faint, dull gleam, and give an inkling of the hidden fires beyond. Happening to raise her eyes, she saw, standing not far from the door on the other side of the room, a young man, whose dark skin and blue sailor-suit had a foreign look about them. He was well-favored, and had an earnest and somewhat gloomy face.

Soon afterward she noticed that he was looking at her, and drawn by some power she had never before known — she thought it was the wish to dance — she looked at him again with calm, clear eyes, and his face pleased her. Suddenly she saw him coming toward her. He bowed to her and asked her to dance with him. As they moved off among the dancers he said, with a certain shyness, looking admiringly the while at her tall figure and fine carriage, " I should never have thought that you would look so tall and grand. When a man's on

horseback you can tell his height, but it's quite different with a woman." She was rather surprised at this way of opening the conversation, and merely nodded assent. Then, as the dance was about to begin, he said, "I beg your pardon, Fräulein, for having asked you to dance. The fact is, I've never learnt dancing nor had a chance to practise, so I propose not to dance and make ourselves ridiculous. I have something else to speak to you about. But first of all I must ask you if you know who I am."

She shook her head, so that the little curls danced around her temples. Feeling drawn to him by his straightforward earnestness, she said, "You don't need to tell me who you are. Only tell me what you want of me. If it's nothing wrong, I shall probably do it."

So he said: "You will have observed that I had a good look at you not long ago, and you looked at me, too. Many people will say that's neither here nor there. But I believe that it does mean something in our case. It means that we please each other. Is that so?"

She saw that all eyes were upon them, and behind her she heard some one say, "Why, man, don't you know? That's the African." And next moment a little dark-eyed beauty, with glowing cheeks and heart overflowing, came running up to her, and slipped her arm around her waist, whispering hurriedly, "Listen! if you like him don't bother about anything else in the whole world. Go with him wherever he takes you. Don't you know me? I'm Elsbe Uhl."

He nodded brightly to little Elsbe, and went aside out of the crowd with his partner, and placed himself so that he could speak with her without being overheard by others. In a few words he told her quite frankly of the object of his journey and its ill-success hitherto, and his early departure. When everything had been thus explained, he said he would take it as a strong and clear sign of her trust in him if she would now consent to further talk over the matter with him. He said they might even leave the throng and go outside. He would promise to give her honest answers to any questions she might like to ask him.

It is difficult to imagine a girl in a more awkward position. For the subject of their dealings — as they must themselves have seen — was known to every one in the room. Only one

or two couples went on dancing, all the rest were busy discussing and observing these two people, and a buzz of talk filled the whole room. The opinions expressed were as various as the characters of the speakers. The shallower sort cracked more or less questionable jokes; the more serious remembered that the destinies of two human beings were then and there being decided; some of the girls made a long face. If she were now to leave the room with the stranger, and were afterward to refuse him or be deceived by him, her reputation would be tarnished, and her name made a subject of laughter as long as she lived. The thought of her good, honest parents made her hesitate, and all her brothers and sisters, a flaxen-haired, blue-eyed band, rose before her imagination. But the good in her prevailed and all false shame vanished. She said, "I have full trust in you; I am ready to speak further with you."

They passed out down the room as through a lane of inquisitive faces, and the excited dancers closed together behind them like waves behind a ship. Once outside, face to face with quiet, lonely night, the girl drew a great breath of relief, and when her companion asked which way they should go, she answered nothing, but walked straight on. He walked in silence by her side; and so they left the town, and took the road to St. Mary's, both full of such deep thoughts and so absorbed by the momentousness and wonder of that hour, that they went, as it were, without a will, led by some stronger power than their own.

At last, when the houses were behind them, and they had walked awhile in silence along the gray, level road, they began with shy, timid words to reveal their circumstances to each other. Their hearts were too full for them to give or obtain from each other a clear objective statement of things, and they spoke only of their simple joys and sorrows. They spoke about things that were laughable, trifling, and out of place at an hour of such importance, but it led to the best results. For by its means they saw into each other's hearts, and were the more quickly brought into sympathy with each other, just as children, who are strangers, make friends with each other while at play.

After the girl, with a certain hardness in her tone, had said that she had no money of her own, and that she was going to

devote the five hundred marks she had saved toward the education of her brother, who wanted to be a teacher, he had answered that those were matters he did not want to know; then she told him about her parents; how her father was softer hearted than her mother, but how her mother knew how to manage money affairs better, and was such a thoroughly good housekeeper. Then she spoke of brothers and sisters, of the big boys' plans, and what the little girls were like — how the second youngest was so fond of a kitten she had that she once took it with her to school, and how her father was a long time before he noticed it as he went by her desk, and it was sitting on the form quite good and serious, and how her very youngest sister used to say she was going to be queen. Ah, how she prattled, and what castles in the air she built, and how she mapped out careers for all her sisters and brothers. How eloquent she grew; for the first time for many a day she felt as if she had a sympathetic comrade by her side. Her heart was opened and her tongue loosed. At last she gave a little start at her own prattle, and said (addressing him with the word "thou," which is in that country the sign of trust and affection), "Now tell me about thyself; what sort of a woman is thy mother?"

So he began. His mother was not overstrong, he said, and was a little too delicate for the lonely and somewhat rough life out there; she would be more at home in some quiet little town of Holstein than she was out on the veldt by the Crocodile River. But she wasn't unhappy; for there was a silent compact between him and his father to pamper and tease her, and, in fact, to treat her a little like a child, and that was good fun for them all. So, for example, they never called his mother by any name but *Uns' littje,*[1] and gave her no peace till she'd had a good laugh at least three times a day; and when they couldn't manage it, and when the old Kaffir, the shepherd, had failed, too, he used to ride over to his sister on Saturday, and she'd come on Sunday with her husband and their five sons, — the whole seven on horseback, and with their hair over their foreheads, — and then she had to laugh in spite of herself.

Then the girl laughed outright, and said: "That is the sort of people I like. For I've been for years now in a big farm-

[1] Our little one.

house where there's no scarcity of good health and bread, but where good spirits and laughter are looked down on as almost sinful things. But in my opinion the best thing in the world is to live kindly and lovingly with those around us, and with everybody."

He nodded, eagerly assenting to what she said. "Ah, you must come back with me, you are just the one for my people."

Now she was mute again.

After awhile she began with more constrained voice to speak about her grandparents, who had been farmers, and how her father was highly respected in the village, and how clever and earnest her brothers were, in the unspoken, innocent wish to make clear to her companion that she was a child of good, honest family, and that he shouldn't believe he had picked her up in the street.

Then he told her that her looks and demeanor had given him the impression that one of the better daughters of the land was at his side, and that he was glad with all his heart that he had won her trust in him, and could walk by her side. She had not disappointed him, he said; on the contrary, he liked her better every moment, and felt already that she was his good comrade, and he would like to go for a longer — a much longer — walk with her if she would have it.

She said nothing. But as they went on and he found she could hardly see the foot-track in the dark, he at last took her hand, and laid it on his arm, and held it fast; and she permitted it. Thus they walked on for some distance in silence, while he would now and then stroke her hand, and their hearts slowly and wordlessly grew closer and closer together.

On and on they wandered along the road through the heath, till after awhile the Goldsoot came in sight. In the dim moonlight they saw the hollow valley and the little round gleam of the fountain pool. Hand in hand they went down to the Soot, and stood still by the water and looked into it. As the clouds drew away from in front of the moon, they saw there their dark reflections in the clear blue light. And, looking up, they saw each other.

"I am thirsty," said the maid, and laughed a little.

He stooped, taking up some water in the palms of his hands, and holding it toward her; and she drank with dainty lips,

and thanked him. Then he seized his opportunity, and laying his two wet hands on her cheeks, kissed her shyly. And when he saw that she offered her mouth, and laid her hands consentingly on his arm, he embraced her, and said: "Now I know that you will go with me."

She now gave a firm and earnest answer: "Yes, I will go with you. I love you as deeply and know you as well as if you had been my sweetheart these ten years. Father and mother will let me go, hard as it will be to them; for they have always expected that my lot would be different to that of other girls; and I can tell you that when I went to the Fair to-day, I was full of all sorts of strange hopes and forebodings — I felt as though something wonderful were going to happen to me."

Suddenly she interrupted herself with a little scream. "Oh! up there in the oak thicket I thought I saw streaks of blood."

He quieted her, saying: "It is only the moonlight; look, you can clearly see it is."

"Or was it your lips?" she said, and laughed. "You wouldn't believe how red they are."

He kissed her again and again, and she made no protest. When he asked whether she had had enough, "Oh, no, not by a long way," she laughed; "I was very hungry." So he kissed her again. Then he put his arm around her, and went down the Goldsoot track into the marsh, and gradually soothed and quieted her, till he had brought her to the door of the farmhouse where she lived.

Next day she plighted her troth to him in her parents' house; and her parents and her fair-haired brothers and sisters looked on with kindly and earnest faces, and two of the boys maintained that very same day, that as soon as they were grown up they would go to South Africa, too. One of them did so afterward; the other found an early grave at home.

On the sixth day the young couple went on board. In Cape Town they became man and wife. It was a happy marriage. Never did she regret having left her home for that strange land with that strange man. Nor did she regret it even when, thirty years later, they brought her news that her third son had fallen in the attack at Colenso. Nor did the blood, which the children of her native heath had once showed her by the Goldsoot, come back to her remembrance.

That evening, soon after the South African and his sweetheart had left the little valley, a cart pulled up, up above on the heath-road, and Harro Heinsen's voice said: "Come, let us go down to the Goldsoot for a little while. Everything that bears the name of Uhl and has kinship with them now has need of gold; perhaps we'll find some there."

"As you wish," said Elsbe. She sprang from the cart into his arms, and he held the little, dainty creature fast, and carried her down the foot-track. And there by the Goldsoot, in the gray dim grass, she became his own.

Jörn Uhl, in his blue linen jumper, stood gazing at the moon — this old, rusted, parched, unfruitful minx — and paying no heed to all the creatures living and loving upon the heath and in the trees and fields around him. Was he not engaged in the high pursuits of science? But as he looked toward the gleaming mountain-tops which stood on the edge of the "Mare Nectar" in the full glow of the moon, the heads of two mortals, cheek to cheek, passed across the moon's disk. Thrown completely out of his line of thought, Jörn lowered the glass and looked into the dark, listening intently to the distant sounds of the night. Then he shut the doors and went to his room, and thought over his work for the morrow.

Thus the winter and spring passed by, and it grew on into summer, while Jörn Uhl went quietly about his daily work, waiting for Fate to deal the blow that was to destroy his family. But nothing happened. It seemed as though farm affairs at the Uhl were still prosperous. There came indeed a blow for Jörn Uhl, but it was not from the direction he expected.

It was in July; they were busy with the hay-harvest when a rumor of trouble and coming war among the nations flew abroad through the land. And the land and the men in it stood with senses all alert, greedily listening to the far-off mutter and rumble of the coming storm. The soul of the people drew the noise into itself. For it was an old, silent, long, long slumbering hope, that now might be fulfilled; and it was an olden quarrel, a long list of old misdeeds and wrongs that might now be righted. Individual men did not think of these things; for each was in trouble and distress, and full of

fear of the furious portents bellowing down there beyond the horizon. But in the mighty soul of the nation this thing without definition of space or time, that neither forgets nor dies, these thoughts on a far-off past, and hopes that had slumbered a thousand years, now began to dimly struggle.

The youngest born of the Uhls did not hear much of what was going forward; these things had no voice for his heart. The time had not yet come for him to see further; he had no eyes for anything beyond the last ditch on Uhl Farm.

It was a day in July when every one was busy with the hay on the dikes. Geert Dose, who was working at the Uhl, plunged his fork deep into a hay-rick, saying: "These Frenchmen are said to be a barefaced lot, so it won't be a bad thing if we show 'em what a hay-fork is like."

"And what then? There'll be another tune to sing."

The stable-boy asked if he was old enough to go as a volunteer. He was just eighteen.

Jörn Uhl shook his head. "Just keep your tongue still," he said; "it'll all come to nothing."

Next morning he woke early and saw that his room was full of moonlight. "It's too early yet to wake the others," he thought; "I'll just get up and have a look at the moon."

During the winter he had industriously studied Littrow, and his delight in observing the stars had grown greater as his knowledge increased. He had made drawings of the moon for himself and of the positions of the stars, and it had given him keen pleasure to see how they corresponded with Littrow's drawings. Pages and pages he had filled with masses of figures, calculating the distances. This employment quenched his thirst for knowledge and filled the joyless void in his soul. So he took down the telescope that now always lay at hand, near the top of the chest, and went out of his room, across the big hall, opened the door, and was about to step outside with the polished instrument in his hand, when the old town-messenger in his blue coat and bright buttons came up. He looked at Jörn with a somewhat surprised air, and said, "I might have expected to find you up, Jörn. I've two papers here, one for you and one for Geert. You're both to report yourselves at the barracks in Rendsburg to-morrow by ten o'clock. War's been declared. I must be off now. I've got more papers to deliver. Come back safe, Jörn."

Jörn let the telescope hang by his side and drew a deep breath. "Well, that's news," he said, and turned around and crossed the hall into his own room. He laid the telescope away in its place and sat down on the chest. "This business may take a long time to settle," he thought. "They're a strong and brave nation, and it'll be a hard tussle. It's an old, bitter quarrel. . . . Hans will have to stay at home. Hinnerk'll have to go with me. Who will come back, no one can say. . . . There'll be a nice state of affairs here. Hans and father. . . . Elsbe. . . . I must go and tell Thiess about it all. I shall call in there on my way. We have to start this afternoon at three. . . . Jasper Cray must be taken on to work on the farm and look after things. He won't get so very much done, but he won't let things go to the dogs. I wonder where Fiete Cray is? . . . This has completely upset all my reckonings, but what must, must be. If they won't leave us alone, why, I suppose we must just give them a drubbing; then we'll be able to plough our land in peace again. Maybe it'll last a year, maybe longer. Jasper Cray is the only one I can put any confidence in. I'll just say a word in his ear and promise him an extra hundred marks if I come back and find everything going right. It's a bitter thing. Here I have a father and brothers at home, and have to run to a neighbor and beg him to look after our farm for us."

Then he got up, glanced around the room, and went out; he woke everybody, and said: "Get up. We've got a good deal to do to-day. War's declared; and Geert and I have to join our regiment."

About six o'clock that evening he and Geert walked down the forest road and cast a look over toward Haze Farm. There they saw Thiess Thiessen with a heavy bag over his shoulder, leaving the farm in the direction of the village; he kept turning to look back as he walked along. They both began shouting, and he stopped. On recognizing Jörn he shook his head desolately, his eyes filled with tears, and he said, while still a good way off: "Jörn, Jörn, it's a bad business I have done. Elsbe hasn't been here for a fortnight, and is in Hamburg with Harro Heinsen. I didn't have the courage to write to thee about it, laddie. And now I have a letter from her, saying he wants to take her to America with him, and she says she's

frightened of America, and bids good-by to us all, and especially to thee."

Jörn looked at Thiess with wide eyes of surprise and anger. "Give me the letter," he said. Thiess Thiessen threw down the bag he was carrying on his shoulder, wiped his hot face, and searched in his pockets for the letter, turning around now and again while he searched, and gazing back toward his farm. "What do you want with all those documents? Where are you off to?"

"Don't ask me, laddie," he moaned; "it's to Hamburg I'm going, and if I don't find her there I'm going to America."

Geert Dose had been feeling the bag. "There are two good big hams in it," he said, "and two flitches of bacon, but they're from a smaller pig, and a pig's head."

"For the journey," moaned Thiess.

"To Hamburg?" asked Geert, politely.

"To America," said Thiess, sobbing outright.

"That's something worth talking about," said Geert.

By this Jörn had read the letter, and was gazing mutely at Thiess. "And now you're thinking of going after her, are you? To judge by her letter she must have left Hamburg before this; and even if she were there still, you can't stop her going to America with him."

"I'll tell her she must leave him and stay with me, and nobody shall say a word against her."

Jörn Uhl reflected awhile. "Thiess," he said, "I suppose you don't know that there's war with France, and that we have been summoned to Rendsburg?"

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" said Thiess; "that's worse and worse; one misfortune on top of the other."

"We have very little time to think over matters," said Jörn. As yet he couldn't grasp the news about Elsbe. What! little Elsbe away with that big, coarse lout, away out in the world among strangers? Suddenly a thought occurred to him. "It's possible that the ship hasn't been able to sail on account of the outbreak of the war. If you find her, do the best you can, Thiess, and bring her back here to the Haze."

"Do you think so?" said Thiess; "do you think I'll succeed?" He looked back at his farm and sobbed, and his tears ran down over his thin cheeks.

"Come," said Jörn, "take heart a little, Thiess; you have

always had a longing to travel a bit, or at least to go and see Hamburg. Now you'll get out of your bogs for awhile."

"Yes, yes," he said, and stopped again and looked back at the old thatch roof. "But it's a cruel thing."

They had reached the top of the rise where you catch sight of Haze Farm for the last time. "I don't know what it is," he said, weeping, "but my spirits are very low."

"What, Thiess! after all your thirst for travel, and your maps, and the Brazils and Japan. It must have all been fancy and make-believe. Why, man, you're homesick."

"No, no . . . I'm coming. . . ." He staggered like a drunken man.

"Turn back, Thiess; it's no good, you can't tear yourself away."

"I can't sleep of a night," the little man moaned; "all night long I see her living there in misery, and I must go after her. And I can't go and leave the Haze, either."

"If Thiess can't sleep," said Geert Dose, "there must be something serious the matter, and he'll be losing his appetite. And what'll he do with the two hams?"

"I must go, I must," moaned Thiess; "it's no good. I'll go with Eckert Witt, you know — the turf boatman. Leave me alone and don't torment. It's got to be."

"Well, off with you, then. We, too, have no more time to stay."

At the crossroads they bade him good-by with a shake of the hand, and stood looking after him.

"The bag's too heavy for him," said Geert. "Look, Jörn, he's regularly staggering with it."

"He can't stand leaving home and all," said Jörn.

"I say, tell me, now, what sort of a country's this France. I mean, is there anything to be got hold of there? Do they fatten pigs there, or perhaps you don't know that, Jörn? . . . See there. . . . He has put the bag down, it's too heavy for the old man, he can't manage it."

"No, he's climbing the embankment," said Jörn Uhl; "he wants to try if he can get a last look at the farm. And that's the man that made out he would feel at home on every cattle track in Further India."

"I'll just hop over to him, and see," said Geert; "I believe it's the bag that's doing it."

Geert took a short cut through the buckwheat paddock, and came back after awhile with the two flitches of bacon under his arm. "What was the good of making him a long speech about it?" said he. "He hasn't the faintest idea of it. He's just standing there yapping over at the farm. . . . Who knows what sort of times we'll have? These two bacon flitches are just the only sure and substantial thing we've got in the whole world — all the rest's just wild confusion."

CHAPTER XIV.

EVERY villager in Schleswig-Holstein knows that a blue dungaree jumper and blue dungaree trousers are the correct traditional costume for stablemen — a costume, be it remarked, very becoming to a good-looking man. It must be confessed, however, that the said blue dungaree is apt to become light blue in parts where it gets much rubbed or used, while the other parts keep their original dark hue. This parti-colored appearance can be still further heightened by the housewife's putting new deep blue patches on the knees and breast. A man may thereby assume such a variegated appearance that it is difficult to believe that an honest, upright Holsteiner is hidden away under this coat of many colors.

It was a place near Rendsburg on the Loher Heath, and France had declared war four days before. And it was four days before when Lance-Corporal Lohmann — the same man who died this year from the consequences of the hardships he underwent in the war — had come galloping into camp, bringing the commander a telegram. A minute later every battery of the Holstein artillery knew they were going to march against France. And without a word of command, as though the bugles had sounded the alarm, they sprang to their horses and commenced saddling and harnessing with flying hands. They thought they would have to be off straight away.

Hans Lohmann, brother of the Corporal Lohmann already mentioned, — 2d Heavy Battery, Number 3, on the right of the gun, cleaner and rammer, — was mute and dazed for four weeks afterward. Only on the third day after the battle of Gravelotte did light begin to dawn on him again. In the first place, he did not understand why they didn't begin fighting right away on receipt of the news; secondly, why the French didn't appear next day on Loher Heath; thirdly, when the batteries were actually under way, how it was possible for the

world to be so big. He had thought the French lived just behind Hohenwestedt and Heinkenborster. But he was under a moral misconception in addition to this geographical one, for he had not understood a word of their captain's address to them about their olden rights and about love of one's Fatherland and sympathy for its aspirations. But afterward Corporal Lindemann, who was for him what a lighted lamp is for a dark room, had explained to him in a few words that the French had insulted the old emperor. "This is the way they've done, Lohmann," and he raised his hand as if to strike.

"How old is he?" asked Lohmann.

"Over seventy."

From that hour forward Lohmann felt that he had a clear knowledge of the state of affairs and a good conscience. "If they strike the old man in the face, then we've a right to dust their jackets for them." So it is evident that Lohmann 2 was somewhat hazy in his ideas.

Not so Captain Gleiser. Bless me! The work that that man got through in those seven days before the departure for the front! Didn't he stand three days at a stretch, from morning till night, like a post in the sand, examining and inspecting the men and horses of his regiment? And they were never good enough for him. In those days he was more than once overcensorious — he, Captain Gleiser, his Majesty's handsomest officer, as he himself said, asserted a hundred times if he did it once in those few days that his was the damn worst battery that was marching against France.

The smithy had driven past him for the eighth time with its six black horses — pace, trot, gal . . . lop. . . . That's the way. That was right — when suddenly a hubbub arose. A long-legged horse, a beautiful animal, refused to pull. He jerked at his collar, pranced, got among the artillery reserves, who were standing there with their bundles, and seemed as if he wished to dance a polka on his hind legs.

"We'll tame him," cried the captain; "bring him out in front."

Strong hands helped the driver to spring on to his back; he was no sooner there than he lay sprawling full length in the dust. "Man, go and bury yourself for shame! Jürgens, you try him. What! go to France with such fellows as *these!* I'll go alone, I tell you, I'll go alone."

But Jürgens soon lay in the hole in the sand which the driver had made.

Captain Gleiser glared around him. He glared around him like a man who, standing in the centre of the world, regards himself as the only man on it. He, yes, he himself would ride the horse! It's worth while to show three hundred inferior men what Captain Gleiser can do. Those are the thoughts he had in his mind as he glared around him.

Among the Reserves who were still standing there in their every-day clothes, a hundred and odd men, there was one a little apart from the others; he was dressed in an old blue dungaree suit, on which big new knee-pieces had recently been sewn. In spite of his height and gauntness he looked a thoroughbred; broad-shouldered and straight, with a proud, narrow face. Many a prince would have been glad to have had the face and figure of this farmer's son hereditary in his family. On his fair, almost white hair he was wearing a blue, peaked cap, and he had a small trunk in his hand. 'Twas this man Gleiser spied out. "Uhl!" he shouted.

Uhl came up.

"Gad! You haven't lost that heavy tread of yours," he cried. "Your father makes clogs, doesn't he?"

"No, he's a farmer, captain."

"I don't care a rap what he is. Can you ride that devil of a horse, or are you a battered old teapot, like the rest of them? . . . Up with you!" Every one of the men who were on Loher Heath that day — those who are still living have now gray hair — knows how stiff and deliberate Jörn Uhl of Wentorf was as he set his gray linen trunk down on the sand, and how he stood up again as though all his joints were cracking, and how, after he had straightened himself up and laid his hand on the dark bay, he seemed to be a different man. His eyes lifted themselves up like lions about to spring. With a leap he was in the saddle, and the dark bay reared and bucked, and whirled around and shook himself, and at last bolted away over the sand and disappeared in a cloud of dust, and left absolutely no trick untried in order to escape going with the others on that campaign against the French. And every one remembers how he gave up the struggle and Corporal Uhl came riding back upon him, carrying his head pretty high.

"Uhl," cried Gleiser, "you'll ride that horse for the future and be Captain of the Sixth Gun."

So Jörn Uhl went to the war as non-commissioned officer.

Eight days later, in the midst of pouring rain, they passed through the long poplar lane that the 74th had crossed six days before, as they were storming the Spicheren Heights. It was miserable weather, and the troops were tired and low-spirited.

Which of them had seen it, or who told the story, no one knows. They saw their old general riding by, and one soldier repeated it to the other: "He just saw them burying an officer; there to the left of the trees. So he rode over and asked them, 'Who are you burying there, men?' 'Our captain.' 'Let me have another look at him,' the old chap said, 'he's my son.'"

A moment afterward he rode past with his adjutant, to the batteries that were driving on through the rain. He wasn't a good figure on horseback, too fat and too short. They looked after him, and marched on.

Miserable weather. "Look, there are three dead horses. Man alive, how they are swollen!"

"I say, what's the meaning of those long flower-beds? That's jolly strange; they've stuck sabres in them!"

"Haven't you got eyes in your head, man? Those are graves."

"For men?"

"Yes, for men; who else? And now stop your jaw."

"Look! There's a rifle sticking in the ground. One of them's used it as a crutch. The crutch is still standing, but the man has fallen."

Miserable weather. How the rain beats through the trees!

The guns go rumbling and rattling slowly forward. Graves; nothing but graves. And the poplars are all peeled and stripped, and the broken branches show their splintered bones.

"We can't get at the enemy. . . . We Schleswig-Holsteiners haven't got a show . . . not we! We're too green and fresh at the work for those Prussian fire-eaters. We're only going for the sake of parade. We've only got to follow in their tracks."

"Those who were in the '66 campaign, they're the ones who'll have to bear the brunt of it."

Who offered this opinion, or whether it was right, nobody troubled to ask.

That night they bivouacked on the wet, windy heights to the west of Spicheren, and threw fourteen French wagons that were standing there into the flames of their watch-fires. They were all somewhat dejected, although many laughed loud, and had a great deal to say. The sergeant grumbled the whole night about the burning of the wagons, and had the iron parts raked together out of the fires toward morning, and was delighted that they brought seven francs for the Battery Fund.

The batteries drove on. It became most tedious, this eternal marching on and on. A thousand times rather straight at the enemy, beat them, and then back home. "Who is there to plough and sow at home? Autumn's coming on. Father can't look after the stables by himself. And what will mother do? And the girl?"

"We're getting deeper and deeper into France. I believe we've lost our way, if the truth were known. Hope we'll come well out of it."

Forward! Forward!

How small Wentorf has grown! Wentorf, the very centre and hub of the earth! Why! There must be fully ten thousand villages in the world, and men like sand upon the sea-beach. At first their battery had been alone, when they crossed the Elbe on two steamers. Then they had grown into regiments, then into a division, then into an army, and now, since yesterday, they were a nation.

On the 14th, the battery drew up on a hill rise, near a cross-road. Captain Gleiser stopped near Jörn Uhl. There below they saw troops marching, regiment on regiment. Artillery and cavalry and endless trains of wagons, squadron on squadron, right away to the hills on the dim horizon.

Gleiser turned around. "Uhl, what do you say to that?"

Jörn Uhl gazed at the scene, but said nothing.

"You farmer, you! It's our Fatherland, Germany, struggling forth out of centuries of distress." He jerked his horse's head around and said no more.

Then Jörn looked up again and saw all these men march-

ing past, all striving toward one common goal, and suddenly he felt the greatness of the time.

Next night they crossed a river by torchlight.

On the 16th, they heard cannon in the distance to their right, the sound coming down from the hills. "There's a bit of an artillery fight going on. Just look! But what can they do at two thousand paces! Just a bit of a row!" And they thought no more about it.

But a feeling like curiosity came over them. A feeling of restless expectancy, like that a hunter feels in the forest, spread among the men.

The 18th dawned, and they again saw, as they had done fourteen days before, many fresh graves, this time with the full sunlight on them.

It is eleven o'clock.

"A fine, sunny day."

If only the graves were not there.

It was a good thing after all that they remained in the Reserves. The day before yesterday just the same as to-day. Always in the rear. "We're much too young and raw, and besides we're troops out of the new province. We won't get to the front, you just see. . . . It's a good thing, too. . . . It's a pity. . . . No. . . . It's a good thing after all. I must go back to my father. I must go back to my sweetheart. I'm too young yet! I want to see something of life first. Then — as far as I'm concerned . . ."

It is eleven o'clock.

It is as still as a Sunday morning in Holstein. That is, if it weren't for the rattle and jolt of the guns, and the creak and whimper of the harness.

"Strange! . . . There, forward, to the right! . . ."

"Do you see? . . ."

"The main body is turning off the road up the heights, as sure as I live!"

"There to the right, man! Can't you see?"

"What does it want there?"

"How do I know?"

"What a lovely, quiet day!"

"Gad! We won't get a sniff of powder the whole of this blessed campaign. Soon it'll be 'Right about face!' and back home!"

"It's too bad, to come back home and not have gone through a thing! Afterward, those braggart Prussians'll be coming and spouting behind their beer-glasses about their great deeds, enough to make the rafters warp, and we'll have to hold our tongues."

"Jan Busch, where did you get hold of that pipe?"

"Oh! my landlady in What-you-may-call-it gave it to me, to remember her by."

"Look! Up there! That's the first horse-battery!"

"Do you see?"

"What the deuce is it doing up there? . . . Can't make it out at all."

"How willing the young horses pull!"

"There, see! the six are standing."

"That captain's a bit hasty, don't you think?"

"My father used to say, at Istedt, he'd say . . ."

"Man, shut up about Istedt!"

"What was that!"

"They're firing, I believe."

"Are they firing?"

"Battery . . . tr . . . ot!"

Captain Gleiser casts a glance over his guns.

Nobody will forget that look. That means business.

Who sees anything else? Who hears anything else? Who says another word?

"Battery . . . gallop!"

Hans Detlef Gleiser pulls up of a sudden, on his high, beautiful bay; the sun sparkles on his helmet and in his eyes. That's his great delight to let his six guns gallop past him, and then give his horse the spurs, and be first in position.

The major comes galloping toward them. He must be wanting to show them where to take their positions. . . . The major sits his horse well, even now his head is off. . . . How horrible . . . now the dead man falls. . . . And the horse gallops madly on.

"What's that horse that goes tearing past as Jörn Uhl's team comes galloping into action? That bay belongs to Colonel von Jägermann, doesn't he?" The horse's flank is red and wet with blood.

"In advancing . . ."

The horses fly to one side.

"Load with shell. Against the enemy's position."

"Eighteen hundred paces."

No more time for thinking now.

"It's not possible."

No more thinking . . . keep cool.

The white tents . . . Men are running about there. Thousands are marching hither and thither over yonder, and stand there in smoke.

Pee . . . ee . . . tchnn . . . tchnn! A rush and a whistle crescendo and decrescendo.

"Keep cool, lads. If you hear it, it's past."

It flies past, singing shrilly, and strikes not far from the wheel tire . . . burying itself with a short, slushy sound in the belly of the pole horse. The horse trembles and falls to one side. The pole-horse rider looks angrily at the mare. "What's the beast thinking of now?" . . . Pee-e nn! . . . His anger has vanished. With a long scream he lifts his hands, as though some one had struck him in the loins with a sharp stake, bends in the hollow of his back, and falls headlong backwards from the rearing horse.

Jörn Uhl jerks his head around, to look at Lieutenant Hax, who has given some order or other; but it can't be understood. There's such a roar and noise and rattle and thunder around them.

But is it necessary? He knows it by himself.

Gun to the front! Gun to the front!

One and two have to lay their hands to the spokes.

Ready with shell! . . . The lock is open.

"Tschn-nn!"

Those mosquitoes would fain sting; there, away in front; the long white line. But there's no time . . . no time. We must keep those wasps from getting too near . . . those up there on the heights.

"Fire at those batteries . . . Fifteen hundred paces."

Number one pulls the cord. The fire flies forth. Out of the crashing and cracking a kind of melody arises. A host of fearful sounds is rushing and flying with maniac eyes and contorted faces over the heights. Half to the left there is a continual squeaking and scratching, a villainous noise, as though some one kept jamming a piece of iron into fragments

of glass. A sheet of flame out of it flits right over the heads of the panting men, there.

"Fire!"

The shell flies.

Jörn Uhl's eyes fly in pursuit. Ah, that was a hit.

A sheet of flame comes flying. With a splutter it passes by. A lieutenant comes trotting in their direction. Jörn casts a glance at him. The lieutenant is mown down and flies to one side. His back is suddenly bathed dark red.

Lieutenant Hax goes from gun to gun just as if he were on Loher Heath.

A soldier comes up, salutes, and stands at attention before him. The blood is welling out of his side, and has formed a stripe down his trousers as though he were a general.

"To the rear."

The man goes five steps, then he staggers. . . .

Some one mentions his name. "See there. Geert Dose."

Lieutenant Hax pulled up suddenly as though he had heard a command.

"Uhl."

"Here, sir."

He turns around.

"Just give a look. I'm wounded in the back."

"Can't see anything, sir."

"No hole?"

"No."

"Well . . . if you say so. . . . Aim at those heavy guns there by the trees."

"Fire! . . . that was too short."

"Fire!"

"That's it!"

Number two stumbles. That's Jan Busch. He staggers backwards and holds his hands to his forehead as though he saw some dreadful sight, and then falls heavily backwards, flinging out his arms. With outstretched hands he remains lying on his back, gazing into the sky with the same terrified eyes. Jörn Uhl springs forward to the gun.

Number five is wounded on the foot. He limps up, groaning, and lays fresh shells at Jörn Uhl's feet.

Lieutenant Hax shouts out to those who are holding the

horses, "Farther back!" There are still three horses left. The others are lying on the ground.

And there are still three men at the gun. The others are lying on the ground.

Jörn Uhl stands over the gun-carriage, with the cartridge-box behind him, the shells lie near him on the ground. He picks them up, peg and screw. With a hard glance . . .

Lohmann No. 2 fires and sponges the gun.

"Lohmann!" shouts Hax, "not so slow, man! Move yourself, we are not on the Loher Heath."

Lohmann can't do it any differently. One . . . and . . . two. . . . Just the same as when they used to practise on the Loher Heath.

"Fire!"

From the left it is getting terribly close, crashing and howling.

Lieutenant Hax clutches his wounded back and sighs aloud, "That Lohmann . . . can't do it any differently . . . I'm blest if he can."

Captain Gleiser rides up: "Good, my lads! that's the way."

Four or five officers of the staff ride by for the second time and halt close behind them. They're not long noticing it; it roars and soughs . . . and splinters fly . . . and shells strike . . . and burrow in the earth. An officer's horse comes down; the rider is flung away over its head, leaps up, and runs to catch another horse that is galloping riderless among the guns; Jörn Uhl helps him to catch it; and in a moment he is sitting on the red housing-cloth.

The horsemen trot away. The cap of the general has a little streamer to it; a piece of the edge is torn off, and a piece of the wadding is hanging out, fluttering in the wind.

They are working hard at the gun; working in the sweat of their brow. Not a moment's rest. Not a moment. They pant and aim, and shove and push, shout and curse. There is a strange, short-breathed, hot wind blowing backwards and forwards. The very earth is spewing fire, and the fire gleams yellow through the billows of smoke. The locks on the guns have become loose, and at every shot a long red tongue of flame leaps out.

They have but the one thought: work, work. They have no other care. They only think, "It's hot work. When will it be over?" They don't think that the foe outnumbers them

and is drawing around them in a half-circle, and may venture a charge at any moment.

There comes number five running up and says, "There are no more shells left."

Now they're in a fix, a cruel fix.

They stood by their gun as though turned to stone, Lohmann stands with the sponge raised; Jörn Uhl, the one hand on the gun-lock, the other clenched in fury, gazes into the lightning among the smoke; Lieutenant Hax drags himself up with heavy feet and shows Lohmann his back.

"Isn't there a hole in it?"

"Yes, lieutenant, now there's a hole, and blood is there, too."

"I can't stand any longer and I won't go away, I *won't,* I tell you." And he spat contemptuously.

An officer of the staff came galloping up. "Why have you stopped firing?"

"No ammunition."

"The devil you haven't! Fire blank cartridge then."

So they fired blank, using linen rags . . . and kept firing . . . and still firing . . . a good long while.

Jörn Uhl, bending over the gun-carriage, reaches almost mechanically to the right: there lie shells once more.

That is a relief.

A beardless young lieutenant stands behind them and praises them, raising his voice above the din. "Well done, corporal! Well done . . . comrade." He salutes across to Hax, who is sitting on the ground propped with his back against a wheel of the gun-carriage. But Hax cannot see him; Hax is staring through half-closed eyes, his underlip contemptuously protruded, down yonder in the direction of the enemy. Suddenly the guns on their left ceased firing.

"What are these two batteries doing? Why don't they go on firing?"

Heavy rifle-firing is heard, half on their left flank, on the edge of the woods.

German Infantry leaps up, flings itself down again, comes nearer and nearer.

"Oh! . . . Those fellows want to help us. . . ."

"The guns . . . why aren't they firing?"

"Fire away, comrades!"

Here and there a single man is still on his feet . . . here

and there a muzzle still flashes. Sergeant Heesch of Eesch still sticks to his gun, though he has but one man left. There he stands amid the smoke and fire. That's a hero for you! They'll talk of him at home, I say, for many a year to come.

"Fire, brothers, fire!"

A strange sort of brawling and roaring keeps growing nearer.

The young lieutenant comes running up, shouting at the top of his voice, "Fire on that battery to the left! . . . Grape-shot, grape-shot, I tell you."

"Lieutenant!" shouts Uhl. . . . "That's *our* battery!"

"Can't you see, man! It's full of red breeches!"

"Right about!"

They all lend a hand, and grip and tug at the wheel-spokes. It is hard work to get the gun around.

"Grape-shot! . . . Four hundred paces. . . ."

Look! Lieutenant Hax is on his feet again. He tries to give the word of command and makes a clutch at his wounded side, and falls headlong forwards. Two or three fugitives come running toward them from the captured battery. One of them falls midway in his flight just as a child falls, and clings to a gun-wheel, and begins repeating the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, one by one. The fourth petition he says twice over. For he was a poor man's son.

Fresh bodies of German Infantry pour out of the wood, they stand and lie and crouch, some here, some there, wherever they can, scattered and in bands. They stand or lie between the cannon, and fire on the howling and bellowing enemy that is rushing toward them.

A fusilier, a nimble, sinewy fellow, with a round, reddish head, has sprung to Jörn's gun, and is shooting from behind it. . . . He is putting in another cartridge.

"Jörn Uhl, laddie! . . . *Adsum,* Jörn."

Jörn Uhl pushes a grape-cartridge into its place, and shuts the lock. . . . Why shouldn't it be Fiete Cray that is standing there by his side!

"Your firing's thrown away, Jörn. It'll be all up with us in a minute."

A shell ploughs up the yellowish brown earth.

"Ah! if Hinnerk could only plough like that, it'd be something like."

"The post-card that I have here stuck in my helmet . . ."

"Write to Thiess. Remember me to Elsbe."

"Lisbeth Junker has . . . But what's the good of talking!"

He heaves the gun around toward the enemy, Fiete Cray helps him.

The hail of grape-shot goes flying once more . . . and yet once more.

The French begin to falter over yonder. But more come on. Multitudes of strange red-breeched men appear in the fire and smoke, pressing forward.

The end is not far off.

Horses! Horses!

The horses are all lying dead on the ground. So Lohmann runs across the field and catches three of those that are galloping about there, riderless, trotting and then standing still awhile; he comes back with them, and the soldiers harness them to the guns with flying hands.

Retire! . . . Retire!

A miserable retreat.

Fiete Cray sits in front on the gun-box and drives with loose reins. Lohmann, standing upright by his side, lashes the worn-out and wounded horses with his whip. Jörn Uhl is trotting close alongside the gun, holding the lieutenant, who is sitting on the axle-seat, crouched all in a heap and swaying like a drunken man.

"It's just like it was in Wentorf," thinks Fiete Cray, "when I'd been robbing the apple orchard, and had Wieten after me, scolding for all she was worth. God be with us! How the wretches curse!"

Two sheaves of flame cleave the smoke; they sweep straight away over the field in front of them.

"The third'll be for us!"

No . . . no, Fate means none of the iron that hurtles there for them. Nor shall any of these flames singe them. They reach the shelter of the wood alive.

There they find from ten to a dozen guns. Others are still coming up in the same plight as they, with staggering, stumbling horses; and three or four stragglers run up, on whose sweat-bathed faces misery and rage are imprinted, and panic fear and wild excitement.

How they work! They tug at the horses' mouths with loud curses and short, wild words. Ammunition is hauled up and

laid in the boxes. The artillery smith, capless and dishevelled, with uniform all torn, is kneeling by a gun that has been hurt; a corporal is stuffing plugs of lint into the deep wounds of a horse, to stop the gush of blood.

Words of command mingle with the din.

Three guns with fresh horses, and a fair complement of gunners — among them infantry stragglers — drive up.

The young lieutenant works away, shouting as he runs hither and thither. . . . Now he can start again with two guns. An officer pulls up his horse on the hill rise, and points with his sword in the direction they're to take. "There! Over yonder! To the edge of yon wood!"

Jörn Uhl sits on the front gun, Fiete Cray is next him.

All around them, from near and far, is heard the roll and roar of guns, and in unabated fury the fearful crackling of musketry and the scream of shells.

Now they have trotted along to the end of the forest road and come out on the edge, and the thunder seems to have receded.

"Do you know what, corporal? I believe it's over there."

"I must be at them," says the youngster, grinding his teeth. "My cousin in the 2d Light Horse has fallen; to-morrow I must write to his mother."

"There are many fallen, lieutenant."

"It's a fearful day."

When they looked around the other gun was no longer there. The roar had abated.

Evening began to descend upon the woods.

And there was none among them to raise his hands and cry like the Jew in his fury, of old, "O Sun! stand still over Gibeon, and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon!"

No . . . No. . . .

They drive on and come out of the wood at the right place.

But the guns are being retired. Fresh infantry regiments are in masses on the field. The enemy is quiet.

It is eventide.

And as the sounds cease . . . there are cries heard out of those bushes and out of yon furrows, "Help! . . . Oh . . . help me!" And up above on the rise, "*Je prie . . . ma mère . . . pitié.*" And out of the dry watercourse, "Water! Water! . . . a drink of water . . . mither, mither!"

Gradually the sounds die down and cease.

On the edge of the wood soldiers are getting down from the gun-carriages and off the backs of their horses.

"My mother put a packet in my breast pocket, in case the worst came to the worst," says the lieutenant . . . "but I can't get my arm up to it."

So Jörn Uhl took it out of his pocket for him, and gave it him, and he offered him the half of it. The pole-horse had lost the lint plugs out of its wound, and the blood was spurting out. Jörn Uhl sprang up and dragged it to one side. It fell. The lieutenant, faint with loss of blood, seated himself on the gun-carriage; Fiete Cray flung himself in the grass.

"Lohmann, go and see what's become of the others."

He laid the sponge that he had taken away in its place, and vanished in the wood.

"Oh!" said the lieutenant; "give me just a single mouthful of something. I gave my flask to Lanky Jack; he emptied it at a pull." He usually spoke of him as Lieutenant Hax, but in this hour he called him "Lanky Jack."

"Do you see, lieutenant?" said Fiete Cray; "here's one of the other side coming!"

A soldier in wide red breeches and short blue jumper came limping slowly toward them. Out of his bayonet he had made a splint for his broken hip bone, and tied it on with his sword-belt. But his foot slipped and he gave a loud scream.

Fiete Cray caught hold of him and helped him to sit down.

"I am a Frenchman," he said, with a good German accent. "Oh! Oh!"

"What?" said Fiete, looking at him in astonishment.

"I am a Strasburger."

"Well, be thankful for it, and just stay still where you are and stop your mizzling." He found a bit of rope in his pocket and set the leg again.

When Jörn Uhl saw Fiete pull this piece of rope out of his pocket, his tongue was loosed.

"I say," said he, "how did *you* get here?"

"I arrived in Hamburg the very day war was declared. Oh, Jörn, my farm! My beautiful butter farm! Not far from Chicago, Jörn! Oh, and my wife, and my two beautiful mares! . . . But I can't bear to talk about it. . . . Stop your groaning, Strasburger, I can't do anything more for you."

Lohmann came back and reported that "over th—th—there . . . the b—batteries were halted." He stuttered; his voice was thick and his gait uncertain. Up to this the lieutenant had been gazing gloomily into space, moving his hand now and then with a suppressed groan to his wounded arm. "Are you wounded?" he asked.

"Devil a bit, sir!" said Lohmann.

If he had only managed to keep his tongue still, all would have gone well; but he got hold of the rammer and swore he would "go across and fight those Frenchies with it, by thunder, he would, he'd fight 'em by himself alone."

So it came out that he had stumbled on some French canteen cart that had been abandoned over yonder by the embankment, and got tipsy.

"Now we can start again," said the lieutenant.

They lifted the Strasburger up on to the ammunition-box, and drove off.

"You are Holsteiners, too, aren't you?" said the lieutenant.

"From Dithmarschen."

"My home's not far from Plön, and my cousin lives in the next village. Now he's shot. I haven't seen him, but I know it, for all the men that served his guns have been killed. . . . It will be bad news for them at home. I ought to write to them . . . but I cannot. . . . Gretchen will cry her eyes out. He was such a fine, brave, clever fellow, too."

"Is Gretchen his sister?"

"Yes; we all used to be playmates. We all grew in the same pot, my uncle used to say."

Fiete Cray consoled him, and said, "There's many a pot gets smashed, sir."

"And Gretchen is engaged to me," said the youngster. "We plighted our troth when we were saying good-by; and that was long ago."

"Yes," said Jörn Uhl, "it was long ago."

"It was three weeks ago by my reckoning," said Fiete Cray.

They all shook their heads incredulously.

"Three weeks? . . . It's impossible."

"Do you mean to say it's only three weeks since I was at home cutting chaff for the cows?"

"It's an age ago . . . an endless time . . . more than seven years at least."

Such was the effect on their brains of their long marches and travels, and of this day of furious battle; everything in their lives before that seemed to have receded into some dim past.

They came upon the other batteries in a hollow not far from the wood. And again there was work to do. The whole night long it lasted! How they worked, there on the edge of the Bois de la Casse! And when morning flushed the sky, there stood there forty guns drawn up in order side by side, spick and span, as if they were on the Loher Heath; two had fallen into the hands of the enemy. Horses and men, their gaps filled up from reserve troops, were again standing by the iron muzzles, ready as soon as the sun rose to drive back again to that same yellow, pebbly field, ploughed with shell, and cut up with ruts of wheels, and scattered over with corpses, and pools of blood, and tatters of harness, and broken weapons, and splintered wood.

But the enemy did not come. The enemy was no longer a tiger roaring as it leaps toward its prey, but an ox tethered and bellowing, goring the earth with its horns.

That forenoon, Jörn Uhl was sent out to get news of some of the wounded. After much seeking he found Lieutenant Hax, lying on his cloak, in high fever.

"Mother's just been here," he said. "She was saying I oughtn't to hurry so fast and make myself so hot. 'You young hothead,' she said, and gave me a box on the ears. She always does that, just for fun, when I've been running too hard. Then I laugh and go to the glass and say, 'See, now, you've made my cheeks redder than ever.' But deuce of a looking-glass is there here. Here there's nothing at all in its proper place. I must make you fellows look after things a bit better. . . . Oh! it's you, Uhl! . . . It has been a bad day for us, and I believe I'm done for."

"It's not so bad as that, sir?"

"The air's so hot one can't breathe in it, especially when one's got to go at such a pace. Just tell me, Uhl, how is it you always go so slow? You're always so stiff and deliberate. . . . Oh, I remember now: it comes from ploughing. . . . I've been dreaming I saw that red-haired youngster that I once bundled off our farm with his little dog-wagon."

"It was no dream, sir. He was really at the guns with us all, helping."

"He's a good sort, Uhl. When I turned him off our farm I recollect he clenched his fist and wanted to fight me. It's not Christian, but it's devilish human."

"It's Christian, too, I should say, sir, for one to fight against what's evil."

"Right! yes, that's it, against what's evil! I'm going to do the same myself. As true as God helps me! We'll clench our fists and hit hard, like we did to-day. And when you're down and can't hit back any longer, you must spit. Yes! Christian and human, one and the same thing. I suppose mother'll have a poor harvest of oats this year on the Ahlbeker Moor. When I get back home I'll plough and plough till I'm as stiff as that corporal of the sixth gun. . . . What's his name again?"

"Uhl."

"Then everything shall blossom out afresh, and I'll build a new house; but the old horizontal bars and so on we used for gymnastics shall stay where they are in the yard. But we won't talk about that just now. Back to your guns, men! . . . I say, Dose, what the devil are you standing there grinning about? Are you wondering why I've got so much to say? I swear I'll send you back to serve with long Sott, you beggar. Unlimber, I tell you. . . . It's not the slightest use. Those Frenchmen are brave fellows and'll get the Iron Cross, you'll see, but a cross for our graves is all that *we'll* get."

"What message shall I give the battery from you, sir?"

"I won't have them keep firing straight in my eyes like that. Is that the way for men to behave? 'In the name of three devils,' does he say? They ought to shoot with turnips, that's better than those filthy blank cartridges; and Captain Gleiser ought to take off those patent-leather boots of his."

Hax had never been able to get on with the captain.

Jörn Uhl looked for Geert Dose, too, but couldn't find him. On the second day he went to the lazarets again, but still sought in vain. Thousands lay there in their misery.

But on the third day he discovered him in the same narrow room in which Captain Strandiger lay shot through the breast. Both had been left untouched by the doctors. It would have been useless.

Jörn Uhl straightened himself up before the captain and saluted, but the wounded man only gazed at him vacantly with great wild eyes, full of fever. Oh, stupid, stiff-jointed Jörn Uhl! Then he bowed over his comrade lying there on the damp, crimson straw.

Geert Dose was perfectly conscious and quiet. His eyes answered Jörn's greeting. There was the same look in them as that day in the Rendsburg Barracks, as if to say, "Jörn, lad, you and I are the only sensible people in the whole room." But now it was bitter earnest.

"Can I do anything for you, Geert, old man?"

"No, Jörn, it's all over with me. I can't understand how I'm still alive."

"Can't I do anything for you? Have you much pain?"

"Pain? There's none in the back; I don't think I've got a back. But here in front from the breast up to the neck. . . . But it's really all the same, Jörn; no good talking. Only I wish I could be back with father and mother just once more. . . . Mother used to give me a nice clean shirt every Saturday, and here I have to lie like this. . . . This one's simply filthy, Jörn."

"My shirt's not so fresh as it might be, Geert, but it's better than yours."

He pulled his coat off and stripped off his shirt, and put his arm around the wounded man to raise him. Geert gave a sudden scream, his head fell back, and he was dead.

Jörn Uhl stood up to his knees in the blood-stained straw. He looked at the dead man, and then at the captain, who, with his head back and dilated eyes, was struggling and panting for breath, and horror seized him for the terrible misery of men.

When he came back to the battery, Fiete Cray had been there and gone away again. William Lohmann, however, had just been put in irons for two hours for having been drunk on the eighteenth. As a set-off and solace, however, he learnt that he had been recommended for the Iron Cross for having sponged his gun that day as if he were at home on Loher Heath, one . . . and . . . two.

Such was the day of Gravelotte for the lads of Wentorf.

There came the camp in front of Metz, in the midst of wet straw and evil smells, and with the plague of lice and vermin.

Many a one fell ill and had to be sent home. Jörn Uhl remained in sound health, did his round of duties, and thought of the Uhl, where it was now harvest-time and the ploughs were running.

Then came the most trying time of the war; long marches right into the heart of France, and, as they marched, one fight after another, all through the winter. To-day no water, and to-morrow no bread; no fire to-day, to-morrow no breath; no roof to-day to cover them, to-morrow no shirt.

And every day the peasants of the country were commandeered for grave-digging! "There beneath the walnut-tree! dig a grave, *paysan! C'est mon camarade, cochon!*"

It came to this at last, that they said to their captain, "Sir, none of us will ever go back home from this terrible war." And the captain would stand and gaze away far off into the east. "And if we don't soon return home, we'll be no longer of any use in the world. We are no longer human beings, but unclean animals." His hair had grown gray in those few months of war.

Jörn Uhl marched with them, kept his gun polished, and his men in fair discipline, and kept thinking to himself, "When ploughing-time comes around again, I *must* be back at the Uhl."

In the beginning of February, one rainy day, in a small town, Corporal Uhl was missing at roll-call. The night patrol found him lying in a gutter in a small street near the barracks. When they took him in charge and brought him to the lazaret, he whimpered, after the fashion of those who have fever, about all sorts of trifling matters, the mud on his coat, and the loss of his cap. They laid him in bed and went away. But as the hospital warders did not watch him, he got up that same night, put on his clothes ready for marching, and went out into the street again. They found him next morning leaning against a wall, dazed with sleep. He was taken back to the lazaret, and there he lay ill with typhus. He was tortured with the fancy that the new silver gun-sight had got lost, and that his men supposed that he, Jörn Uhl, had thrown it away so as to escape from serving against the French. The sick man carried this torturing hallucination with him for more than a hundred miles, and it did not vanish until he came under the care of good nurses in Strasburg.

CHAPTER XV.

FIETE CRAY got his discharge from the army as early as March, and went to see Jörn Uhl in the lazaret. He found him almost well again, and took him with him to Hamburg.

So one afternoon Jörn Uhl, tall and lank, still pale, and still a little listless, and little Fiete Cray, with his quick steps and restless, prying eyes, passed through the Hamburg streets looking for lodgings for the night. Both of them were dressed in the threadbare old uniforms that had been given to them to come home in.

As they walked along in this fashion, Jörn Uhl with his eyes on the ground, and Fiete Cray with his eyes everywhere about him, a tall, good-looking, fair-haired girl came in their direction; her skin was fair, too, all white and red, in the freshest bloom of youth; she had a book under her arm, and was simply and very soberly dressed. And Fiete Cray looked at her, and couldn't help looking at her again; for there's something peculiar in her face, something that reminds one of Wodan's Heath and Haze Farm. The remarkable thing about her, too, is that there's something lightlike and fugitive in her bearing and in her hair and eyes, and that the shy gray eyes are set a little slanting in her face, like the two wings of a dove that is about to take flight.

An uncertain glance of recognition flies backwards and forwards between them. Both of them suddenly stop, and Jörn Uhl, too, lifts his eyes.

"Oh, Jörn, Jörn! . . . How ill you look! Oh, Fiete Cray! I have heard from Thiess that you have been with the others in France, and that you're married. . . . Oh, Jörn! what will Thiess say! . . . Did you know that Thiess is back in Hamburg?"

It was Lisbeth Junker standing there before them, shaking their hands as if she would never stop. Her eyes were like

two brilliant flames, like the May fires upon Ringelshörn, especially when she looked at Jörn Uhl, especially Jörn Uhl.

"Is Thiess still here?"

"Yes. Just fancy! He's still looking for Elsbe, for he's found out that she didn't sail with the ship she meant to. And now one of our acquaintances will have it that he has seen her; but there are others who think it possible that Harro Heinsen got away before the war by way of Copenhagen."

"Do you know how things are going on in Wentorf? Or have you left there for good?"

"My grandparents are dead," she said, "but I know the new teacher's wife very well. I was there only last Christmas."

"And what are you doing here?"

"I'm staying with my aunt. She keeps a little shop for stationery, and in my spare time I'm taking lessons in bookkeeping."

"Can you tell us where Thiess is to be found?"

"Yes; and I'll come with you."

So they walked out to St. Paul's, a good, long distance, and came into Mary Street, with its lofty, desolate-looking boarding-houses. They climbed four flights of stairs, and Lisbeth Junker opened a door at the end of a dark passage. There sat Thiess Thiessen near a little iron stove. He was holding a small coffee-mill between his knees and grinding away so intently that he had not heard them come in.

"Oh, Jörn! . . ." he said, springing to his feet. "There you are at last! . . . Fiete! My laddie! Oh, Fiete! . . . Children, what a wretched state of affairs this is! I'll have the coffee-beans ground in a moment, and you shall drink as much as you like."

He was now hunting about the room for his slippers. "It's no matter, children; it's no matter! Here we are all together, and these four walls are now Haze Farm. Oh, the poor little lass! . . . Lisbeth, haven't you seen her anywhere? This is the time of day when poor folk's wives are abroad in the streets, doing their buying. God knows, but the poor lassie may have naught to buy with. Just think, Jörn. . . . Just picture to yourself that little helpless soul in this great, fearful city. . . . Fiete, I believe he beats her! He wants to get to America with her. But I lurk about all the wharves, so that he sha'n't get away with her. How can a man want to go to America? A place like that, miles away from Haze

Farm? Lisbeth, lass, you make the coffee for them. Here's the kettle! In this place the water runs out of the wall. At our place down at the Haze it runs against it. It's a crazy, topsyturvy world."

Fiete Cray pushed him back into his chair, and said, "Now just sit still there, Thiess, and don't go thinking that she'll let him beat her. Here's your other slipper, Thiess. As soon as she sees that he no longer cares for her, she'll run away from him at once. According to my idea she's left him already, only she won't venture to come back to Haze Farm, and is fighting her way for herself, somewhere or other. She's afraid of you and Jörn. Shame keeps her back."

Lisbeth thought that might be quite possible; and Jörn nodded.

"So there, now, Thiess. . . . And now bear in mind," said Fiete, "that we've a long railway journey behind us; and while you're getting bread and coffee ready, we can go on yarning."

The conversation almost took a cheerful, sociable tone, thanks to Fiete Cray, who coaxed the old farmer to talk, and thanks to Lisbeth, who poured out the coffee and cut the bread.

"Sit down, old earthman," said Fiete Cray, "and be quiet. You just see. We'll get Elsbe back again yet."

"Yes, Thiess. And now have something to eat. Here's your cup."

"Do you know what?" said Fiete Cray, leaning back in his chair as if he were quite at home. "This reminds me of one of Wieten's fairy-tales. I don't set much store by such things now, but this one has just come to my mind. You, Thiess, are the good-natured old dwarf who took in the two tattered and weary travellers. Then we got a beautiful glass princess to wait on us. And afterward we'll go off on our journey again, and find our sister at last."

"It's just like your impudence to say I'm made of glass!" said Lisbeth, pouting. "There's still a good deal of the Cray about you, it seems to me."

"And you've grown so fine and bonnie," he said, laughing in her face; "and I've always thought you were a bit like glass, haven't you, Jörn? She never used to go through thick and thin with us like Elsbe did, but always stood a little distrustfully to one side. And then, besides, it's more than a

year since such a neat little minx has poured out coffee for me. Thank you kindly, Rain-tweet."

"You've always been fond of putting your nose in other people's affairs, and seeing more than's good for you," she said, with a toss of her head. The little maid no longer looked at him or even at Jörn, and was, truth to tell, really a little stiff and glassy.

"Tell us about Elsbe!" said Fiete Cray, looking severely at Thiess. "You're certain to have stood godfather in the affair."

"Yes," said Thiess Thiessen, with a groan. "But what is there to tell? He used to visit her at Haze Farm, and I went on sleeping and noticed nothing. I used to say, 'Child, how pale you are! Didn't you sleep well last night?' 'I slept fine,' she said, 'a queen couldn't have slept better.' And I was so glad to hear it. Once she asked me, 'Tell me, Thiess, isn't there an old law that when young folk have promised to marry each other, they are like married people before God and the world?' 'Yes, child,' I said, 'I've read in some old chronicle how Wolf Ironbrand, the hero of Hemmingstedt, spent the night before the battle in the room of his lady-love. I believe that's old Saxon or Frisian custom.' Well, we left that subject, and I went on with my day-dreams. I'd say, 'Go for a drive into town, Elsbe,' or I'd say, 'Stretch your wings and have a fly into the forest, little Uhl.' But she'd go about the house, whistling and singing and saying, 'I don't want the town and I don't want the wood. I'm as merry as a cricket where I am.' I still noticed nothing. Then one day Harro Heinsen came riding up on his bay mare, and leapt the rails by the hedge gate, and said he was going to propose to Elsbe, and laughed.

"Well, and then . . . five or six days afterward he came back full of abuse for his father and for Klaus Uhl. 'They neither of them were worth a penny,' he said. They could not buy him a farm. When she heard this, the little lass seemed of a sudden to lose her good spirits and looked quite grave. I've never seen her like that before. All her great happiness was dashed to pieces. I said to them, 'Stay here on Haze Farm. There is more to be made out of the old place if a man was here who liked work.' I'm too sleepy, Fiete. I confess it, and I won't make any secret about it. But Heinsen laughed, and said he hadn't come down to being a Geest farmer yet. I could see how eager she was to remain,

though. He dragged her away from the farm as one drags a foal by the halter, that looks around when it gets to the gate with a long look of regret."

He shook his head despairingly, and moved his feet about, feeling for his slippers, and his eyes ran over with tears.

"I slept through it all," he went on, in a querulous voice; "that's why I'm being punished for it now. I must sit here in this hole, while many a mile from here Haze Farm lies basking in the sunlight, and the beautiful mounds of turf are piled in the high grass, and the catkins hover about in the ditches, as if they were listening to some slow, solemn music, and rock themselves to the tune of it. And I dream every night and look for the child in the reeds and can't find her, and while I'm at it I tumble into the water, and wake up and can't get to sleep again. You can see by that, Fiete, what a state I'm in when I can't sleep any more. The old woman who lives near me says it's homesickness, and she speaks the truth. It's a terrible attack of homesickness that I have. You know my little bedroom at Haze Farm, children. If ever I come back to dwell in peace at the Haze, the first thing I'll do will be to whitewash it, and out with those maps of foreign parts. . . . The old woman wants to do what she can for me. She's got a book on medicines, and gives me mercury and phosphates. She says that's good for homesickness. But it's not only homesickness I've got — it's a bad conscience; and she says there's nothing for that in her medicine-book. I overslept myself, and that's why I have to live here in misery now, and go running about the wharves and the streets all day, and search about among the reeds on the moors at night."

This was the way Thiess Thiessen complained. His thin, drawn face looked very long, and his little, blinking, childlike eyes seemed entreating help. He kept moving his leather slippers backwards and forwards the while, and sometimes when they got out of his reach he would half-raise himself from his chair and fetch them back, gazing at his visitors the while.

During Thiess's explanation Fiete Cray had been leaning across the table and gazing at the speaker. That comfortable feeling which the poor hunted brush-maker's boy had so often felt when he reached Haze Farm, in times gone by, had come over him again.

Lisbeth looked at Thiess Thiessen with those pensive, earnest

eyes of hers, and now and again threw a swift glance in Jörn Uhl's direction; but he was sitting there mute, his eyes fixed on the table. His heart was as though frozen and lifeless from the illness he had undergone and the new cares he had to bear. He did not look even at this maiden whom he had regarded so affectionately from his earliest childhood, and whom he had loved so when he was a boy, and who was now sitting before him in the radiant freshness of her beauty. It was no hour for him to think of love.

"I start of a morning at about eight o'clock," continued Thiess; "and of an afternoon I'm off again searching through all the streets where the poorer folk dwell, and along the harbor. And five times," he said, and his voice was like that of a child about to cry, "I've been by when they've pulled a girl out of the water. I believe if ever she comes to want she'll do it."

"No," said Fiete Cray, and for the second time he proved himself a judge of character. "She won't do that. There's no one clings more stubbornly to life than Elsbe. You don't know her. . . . Have you looked for the name Heinsen in the directory? Have you been to the police-station?"

"I haven't found a thing," said Thiess; "and the worst of it is that many a time when I'm looking for her, and see something that strikes my fancy, I get dreaming over it, and stay there and forget everything; for example, I fall to pondering what the trolley-driver's thinking about, and how many children the tram-conductor has, and where the big dog sleeps at night and who he belongs to, and what the haggard old newspaper woman must have looked like when she was still young and sprightly. And then on the wharf, Fiete, I wonder what's in the bales and sacks, and what sort of a look the people and lands have where these things come from. And then the Punch and Judy show down by the Sailors' Arms. Eh, Lisbeth? That's the best thing in all Hamburg, isn't it?"

"Have you no friends or acquaintances, then?"

"Yes," said the old fellow, somewhat embarrassed, "they've got a kind of club here."

"What!"

"Well, you see, it's this way. Here to the left there lives a cobbler who comes from the Geest, not far from Meldorf, and right up there — do you see, Fiete? — there, close to the tele-

graph wires, one of the Strackelmeiers lives — you know, the Strackelmeiers of Hinthorp. You know the family, Fiete. You once bought a dog from them and sold it to me. A beast that was no good, Fiete, and had never been properly trained. He has a wife and grown-up children, but I believe his wife doesn't get on very well with him, and he's a small, insignificant man to look at. He's glad when he gets down and away from his room up by the telegraph wires."

"Oh! and so they all come here to you, eh, Thiess?"

"Yes. You see, they have a sort of club; a club is something the same as what knock-off time is with us. So we sit together here a bit and have a crack."

"What! do they both come here to you?"

"Yes, always. That's just it — they are both a little homesick. You haven't an idea, Fiete, how much homesickness there is in this big town. Every third man has it; not only those who were born free in the open country, but their children, too, have it in their blood. It's only the third generation that begin to take it in, how clever and knowing it is to live in flats one above the other in narrow streets. . . . Well, these two poor men come to me; for I heat the room with turf from Tunkmoor; Eggert Witt brings it to me by the sack. And on top of each sack there is always — not a golden bowl, Fiete, but a good fresh loaf of home-made black bread. So you see that this sack is, so to say, our club's foundation-stone. You have noticed, Lisbeth, how a little smoke always comes out when Strackelmeier opens the stove. He does it on purpose, just because he wants to get a sniff. Fiete, you know the old thatched cottage between Brickeln and Quickborn, just where the road turns off to Grossenrahde; well, that's where he comes from. His father had a rye-paddock there to grow enough for bread, and a little bit of turf-bog to bake the bread with. The house had no chimney, and the smoke found its way out by itself. He grew up in the smoke. He's all wrinkled brown with it, and that's why he keeps so well preserved. When he comes in, he raises his nose high, and wants to be terribly sociable; doesn't he, Lisbeth?"

"Come," said Fiete Cray, "it's time for us to be going to our lodgings. You'll soon look a different man, Jörn. Don't you trouble, Thiess; I know a very good place for us to stay

at in King Street. Won't you and Lisbeth come a piece of the way with us?"

So they all four walked along together. Evening had fallen; it had been raining heavily and was still drizzling. Yellow and whitish lights fell upon the dark streets, and on the watery mirrors of the pavement. And Thiess turned his head and stopped, and then ran in order to catch up with them, his hob-nailed boots clattering on the pavement.

"It's just the sort of weather for her to be out," he said; "the sort of weather for people who are ashamed, and are not well dressed, and sad." He looked up at them with a shy smile. "I am thinking I'd like to walk up and down a bit here," he said.

"You'll get wet through, Thiess; take the umbrella," said Lisbeth.

"No, no. I'll soon get dry again. . . . You two will come and see me again to-morrow, will you? And take care to bring Lisbeth safe home."

So he said good-by, and they stood looking after him. They saw his back all glistening with rain, as he went trotting along in his high top-boots. Several passers-by stopped, and looked after the little man.

"Oh, Thiess, Thiess," said Fiete Cray, "when we were children and you used to play Tom Fool to make us laugh, who would ever have suspected what was in you! This is a bad day for the children of Wentorf! Come along, now, Lisbeth."

The three walked on in silence. After awhile Fiete Cray said, "I'll just go into this inn, and wait till you come back. You'll see Lisbeth home; that's your business, you've always been hand and glove together."

Jörn went with Lisbeth as far as her aunt's door. They had little to say to each other. He asked her this and that about her daily life, and she told him how kind and good her aunt was to her, and how her life was rather quiet and lonely and a little hopeless; in other respects she had little to complain of. She said all this in the same reserved, shy way in which she had always spoken. To her questions he gave but short and scanty answers. She said not a word about the times of her girlhood. As he gave her his hand to say good-by she thawed a little, and held his hand fast in hers, and said,

" In the summer holidays, Jörn, I'm coming to Wentorf; and I am coming to see you, too, mind."

But as he seemed to take no notice of her words, she quickly let his hand go and vanished behind the gently closed door.

He found Fiete Cray waiting at the inn. " Oh, . . ." said Fiete, " I thought your good-by would have taken a bit longer! But I suppose you know best! . . . And now I'll tell you something. I'm not going to see Thiess Thiessen again, nor Lisbeth Junker either, nor Wentorf either, but I'm going straight back to America to-morrow."

" What? " said Jörn Uhl. " Do you mean to say you're going away again without having seen your parents? "

" My parents," he said, " have cost me dear enough already. Don't pull such a stupid face, Jörn, and I'll tell you about it. Last summer when I got to Wentorf, just before the war broke out, in order to claim a small legacy, what did I hear but that my aunt wasn't dead at all. Some rogue of a farmer had played a practical joke, and written a letter to my father, saying she was dead, and would he come. So Jasper Cray put on his black Sunday coat and went into town, but in the gladness of his heart that the old body was dead at last, he bought five or six great, big, expensive wreaths, with long ribbons and beautiful inscriptions on them; these he took with him into an inn and there drunk a little more than was good for him. In this condition, with his wreaths strung over his arm and shoulder, he arrived at my aunt's. She happened to be sitting at the window when he came up. Well — you can paint the rest of the picture for yourself. . . . So Jasper Cray came back home again, wreaths and all. Mother cried and he whistled. He whistled, and hung the six wreaths around the four walls of our room. You know, Jörn, we Crays have a great fancy for gay, bright things. It looked famous, I can tell you. The broad, white ribbons hung down over the chair-backs, so that we had the words on them right before our eyes: ' Though lost to sight to memory dear,' ' In sad and loving memory,' and ' Till we meet again,' and so on. And while I'm sitting there and mother's telling me the miserable story, and I'm thinking, ' It's for this you've left house and home and wife, and come five thousand miles,' who should come in but the town-messenger of Mariendonn. ' War against France,' he says, and gives me a slap on the shoulder. ' You've just come

in the nick of time, Fiete Cray, and have to serve along with the others.' So I sat down and wrote to Trina: 'Such and such is the state of affairs, and I hope to come back safe and sound, and when I come see if I don't carry you in my arms for a month.' I thought of being away three months or so, Jörn, and it's nearly a year, now, since I left her, and I've never heard a word from her. So you can't be surprised that I'm anxious about her, can you? although, mind you, I left her in the care of a good friend. What's the object of going back to Wentorf? . . . And one thing more, Jörn Uhl. If things at the Uhl go too much askew, don't go burying yourself forever in this poverty and misery, but tear yourself loose from the whole business and come over to me."

Jörn Uhl laid his clenched fist on the table and said, "From the time I was twelve I have done nothing but worry and work for the sake of the Uhl. I'm determined to see whether I can't wrench it out of their hands after all."

Next morning Fiete Cray took ship back to America, and Jörn Uhl returned to Wentorf. As soon as Thiess Thiessen had seen Jörn's train steam out of the station, he went through the city streets and renewed his search.

For eight years he lived in Hamburg continuing his search, and Peter Suhm, Hans Suhm's son, managed Haze Farm for him the while.

Sometimes tortured by the pangs of homesickness, he would walk or go by train back to the Haze, loitering around the house, drinking in the air, paying little visits to moor and forest, and running over to Jörn Uhl at Wentorf, making all sorts of little alterations on the farm, as if he meant to stay there for good, and would remain four, nay, in very bad attacks of his malady, even eight weeks at a stretch. Then restlessness and sleeplessness would come upon him, and he had to tear himself away from home with ever the same recurring smart, and bury himself in the big town again, and live in his little room with his iron stove, and his turf and his club, and seek and seek through the long streets.

Those who dwelt by the side of the road that goes from Wentorf to Hamburg by way of Itzehoe and Elmshorn, must remember him still; for he generally wandered along this long highway on foot, being convinced that some day or other he

would meet her returning home that way. And those who live in Hamburg and around St. Paul's as far as the Elbe road must recollect the little man they so often saw tramping through the streets in his big country boots and his short, thick, dark gray jacket, and searching about with his little, childlike, eager eyes. There was something of an odd monotonous jog in his walk; it was a jog such as folk get who have repeatedly to traverse the same paths. What chiefly struck people, however, was that he didn't pass along the street with indifferent or inattentive gaze, but that his ferret-like eyes seemed to dart everywhere between the passing men and women; they noticed how at times he would stand back and lean against a wall, and for a quarter of an hour at a time watch with shrewd, yet kindly, dreamy eyes something or other that had roused his interest in the hurly-burly of the streets.

CHAPTER XVI.

At various times in their history the people of this province have returned home in various moods, according as they were conquerers or conquered. For the land of Schleswig-Holstein has from time immemorial been a very cradle of peoples and princes.

In olden, far-off days, when the land had grown too narrow for the folk who dwelled there, they equipped their big-bellied ships with long oars of ashwood and broad gray sails, and sailed oversea to Britain. And a few boats returned with scanty crews, who went about from farm to farm, their long hair tied with gay-colored ribbons of wool, and brought greetings and messages from those over there in the new land. And the messengers said that the land was fair, with broad plains for horses to graze on, and deep lakes with fine fish in them, and that the people who lived there were conquered; and that they had been sent to say that the gray-eyed Mechtild should come over, and Traut, the red-haired maid, and little Emma and many another, to be mistresses there on the broad farms, and have many nimble thralls and servants to do their bidding. And as the messenger went through the farm-gate on his way, he shouted in his pride and glee and flung his spear into the branches of the nearest linden.

Five hundred years later they were away eastward, driving out the Wends, who had made a foray into their land. But between Neumünster and Eutin, as they were turning the corner of a certain wood, lo! the wood became alive with men. Swift Wends were suddenly upon them, darting backwards and forwards till their heads were all in a whirl, and still swifter Wendish arrows darted through the air, disabling many a stalwart man. That time they came home to their firesides with long drooping moustaches and gloomy looks.

Another five hundred years and the Dane was harrying the

land. Its wealth and the yeomen's long-haired daughters had enticed him thither. They called out the land-guard, the bells from every village rang out their tocsins, and beacon-fires flamed along the dikes. The sea, their neighbor and at most times their foe, made a league with them for three days, and they smote their enemy, and caught his army by the throat and smothered it in the mire of the bogs. And when Hinnerk Wiebers returned to his farm, he found his wife sitting by the hearth, and flung at her feet the golden cups that he had got in the pillage of the king's carriage, and laughed as he tied up his tawny hound with the golden chain which Duke Adolf of Holstein had hung around the neck of the proud chevalier of Wisch.

Various were the moods in which they returned home from abroad. Not always with the exultation of a victor. . . . Five and twenty of them from Hemmerwurth — which is a little village at the mouth of the Eider — manned two ships and declared war against Hamburg, and would fain have blockaded the Elbe. Hemmerwurth against Hamburg. They were taken prisoners and cast into the tower where the dungeons are darkest. Finally, those of them were released who could pay their share toward the thousand Lübeck marks ransom that Hamburg demanded. All of them could do so except Maas Jarring. He had no money. Neither would any of his comrades help him, for he had a wanton tongue, and was a rogue to boot. In his despair, therefore, he gave his companions who were returning home a written pledge, swearing by St. Anne of Bösbüttel, the grandmother of the blessed Redeemer, that he would marry Telse Bokel, who was no beauty. So she paid his ransom for him, and he was released and came back home. *Not* with the exultation of a victor.

There is no end to such stories. For the land is old, and has witnessed many a strange thing.

Jörn Uhl did not return with the feelings of a victor, nor did he by any means expect any one to hail or honor his coming with flag or festival. On the contrary, it seemed quite natural to him that it was gloomy weather, and that the long sullen ships of fog should be moored on both sides of his way through the fields.

In the half-light of evening he saw that the land had been badly ploughed, and that the wheat-fields were unevenly sown.

The hedge-gate of the grazing-paddock was broken down, and lay projecting into the road, so that the cart-wheels had had to make a bend to avoid it. They had all been too lazy to put the obstacle aside. He laid his bundle down in the wet grass, and put the gate on its hinges again.

As he issued from the lane of poplars he saw light streaming from the high unshuttered windows; it fell bright upon the stones of the courtyard, and touched the sandstone door-posts, so that the golden letters on them gleamed, showing where the names of the Uhls that had lived on the farm were inscribed from generation to generation. As Jörn Uhl looked, young people came out over the threshold, talking, and glancing up to see what the weather was like, and then went inside again. He withdrew deeper into the shadows of the poplars, and went along the servants' path to the back of the house, where there was a door that led into the threshing-floor. The young people had caught sight of a dim form passing, and one of them said, "There's a fellow going to stand at Wieten Klook's window."

A moment afterward he heard his brother's voice: "Man alive! if I didn't know he's got typhus, I'd have sworn that that was Jörn."

He tried to make as little noise as possible with his iron-clamped shoes, and, coming to the door, was surprised to find it open; for this was part of Wieten's work, and was always attended to. With his hand stretched out before him in the dark, he passed across the long floor. He gave his arm a knock against a piece of wood, and recognized the oat-box in front of the horse-racks. Next moment his foot made a rustle in some straw, and the soft sound told him that they were oat-sheaves. He stooped and caught hold of the head of the sheaf, which had ripened and been harvested while he was away in France, and was now lying there for the flail of the thresher. Then he began to feel himself at home once more.

And again he wondered that the door that led into the middle hall stood open, and that flickering firelight fell on the floor from the open kitchen door, as though to guide some one thither through the dark. He stole up to the kitchen slowly and hesitatingly, ready to go to his room at once if strangers were there. But there was nobody but Wieten sitting there knitting by the unsteady light of the fire, with

her spectacles on her nose, and looking over the top of her spectacles at him; he heard her voice trembling with restrained feeling, saying, "And there thou art at last . . . laddie. . . . I have been expecting thee all day. . . . I have got the coffee on. See . . . it'll soon be ready."

She had stood up and was trying, after the way of our people, to control her feelings; she put out her hand to catch hold of the kettle that was on the knob. But her great longing and the joy in having him home safe and sound once more caught her outstretched hand and forced it in another direction. And, lo! there lay the hand trembling on his arm.

"Wieten!" he said, "my old Wieten!" He felt shyly for her hand, and took it caressingly in his. "Art thou so glad, then, that I am back again? And hast thou been well all the while I have been away, Wieten? And art still hale and hearty, eh?"

She could only nod, for something kept rising in her throat and choking her voice. Then she laid her knitting away on the window-sill, and said, "Bring it into the sitting-room to us, Lena."

Then for the first time Jörn noticed a tall girl standing over by the dresser gazing at him. The firelight now fell on her as she crossed the room, and he looked at her, and her looks pleased him; for she was tall and well grown, and had a certain dignity in her walk. Her face, besides, was fresh-colored, all white and pink and softly rounded, and her hair was yellow and wavy; only around the ears there were little curls big enough for one to put one's finger into. Jörn thought he had never yet seen so fresh and comely and at the same time so decent a girl. And it pleased him, too, to see how she nodded to him and wished him good evening, and looked at him with such frank curiosity and such kindly, earnest eyes.

It was a good sign that the first question he asked after he came home was about this girl.

"Where in the world did you get *her* from, Wieten?"

"Oh, that is Lena Tarn," she said. "She's been here in service since November. . . . And now drink your coffee, Jörn. They're at their capers again in the front room. Hinnerk's been buying horses, and it's not enough that he's paid through the nose for them, but he must go and give the dealers a wine

supper as well. . . . She gets sixty shillings a year as wages —a great deal too much, in my opinion."

"Is she really as good as she looks?"

"Oh, as you know well enough, Jörn, there's always some drawback to them. . . . She sings too much for my fancy."

"Sings, does she? But she looks so sensible."

"Oh, I see. You think she must be a bit of a saint because she looks so grave and innocent, eh, laddie? But not by a long way, Jörn — not by a long way. Anything but that."

"Rather wild, is she?"

"No. I wouldn't like to say that of her. It's only that she's so singy, and she's a trifle too saucy and plain-spoken for me. That's a thing I don't like in a girl. . . . There, do you hear that?"

They could hear her singing away to herself in the next room.

"But, Wieten, I'd like to know who'd sing if not young girls. . . . Does she share your room?"

"Yes; she sleeps there, too. That's one of the conditions she made when she entered service here. Her parents are respectable folk, and she likes to keep to herself. I must say that for her. But, as I say, she's too singy, and wants too much of her own way. That's all I've got to say about her. . . . Now, do drink your coffee, Jörn."

He ate and drank, and then said: "Now, Wieten, just sit yourself down in that chair of yours, and tell me how it came about that you were expecting me home to-night?"

"What a question, Jörn! Do you think I couldn't feel it in all my limbs that you were on your way back? The doors would have been left open for you all night, and I wouldn't have stirred from the fireside, and that's a fact, Jörn."

She had opened his bundle and spread out his linen, and was astonished to find it all in such good repair. He told her how a kind-hearted woman had given him a good supply while he lay ill in the lazaret.

"And then, Jörn," she said, after awhile, "it was high time you came home again."

She went off to the wash-house for a moment, and then came back again and stirred the glowing turf-fire with the tongs, and he saw that she was weeping. "One can't shut one's eyes to the way everything's going to ruin on a farm

where one's grown old and gray. And there's Elsbe's life ruined, and then what's to become of you, Jörn? I feel as if you two were my own children, and so I must just tell you everything. There isn't an afternoon goes by but your father drives off into town, and then comes back and sits in the public-house that's kept by that Torkel. You know the man, Jörn; he has a good-for-nothing wife and two loose-living daughters. And your brothers have grown worse than ever with their drinking ways, and are always running after the girls. I know for a fact, too, that there are some people who want money paid back that they've been swindled out of by them. Up to the present I've lived an honest life, Jörn, and grown gray without disgrace."

The ruin of his family now loomed huge and threatening before him. He went to the window; and Wieten went, too, still weeping to herself, and, as she stood there, chanced to look out. It was a starry moonlight night, although somewhat misty and cloudy. She began lamenting that she had not made them carry away the plough that was lying there across the drive. One could see the polished iron gleaming in the moonlight. "The man who had been ploughing was tipsy, and didn't want to go out in the rain again. When your father comes home to-night, his horses may shy at it."

"The horses are accustomed enough to night-work by this time," he said. "Come, let us go to bed now."

"But won't you look into the front room and let your brothers know you're come back again, Jörn?"

"No. I've come home rather too soon for them. Let us go to sleep, now. Is that girl in bed yet? Give an eye to her, Wieten, and see that she doesn't fall into the hands of those louts in there. It would be a pity. Elsbe's gone to the bad, — let one be enough."

They parted without saying good night, for almost before they had finished what they had to say, they were both lost in anxious thought. After his old custom, Jörn threw himself down on his bed without undressing, so as to be ready to attend to the horses when his father came home. But he could not rest, so he got up again and went to the window and looked out into the night. And Wieten was standing at her window, too, at the very same time, bending forward to get another look at the plough. She sighed as she saw it

gleaming there, and shook her head as though in fear and dread of it. Then both lay down once more, and when they had done so their souls were drawn down, despite all will of theirs, into vast abysms of gloom and dreams, and had no power to escape. And while they moaningly wrestled with the darkness, and whilst the maid Lena, too, talked to herself in restless sleep, there arose a dull sound of something moving in the dark stables, of things dragging heavily and scraping over the long floors; and the great double doors between the rooms flew open as with a heavy blow. But none of them were able to shake off their slumber; dark, mighty hands held them down in sleep.

A little before six o'clock next morning, before day had yet dawned, Jasper Cray came into the kitchen. He was not a little taken aback when he saw Jörn standing near Wieten by the fireside. But he said quietly enough, as though he might be speaking of an accident to a cart-horse, "Just come out a moment, Jörn, will you. The master's cart's capsized, and he's fallen against the plough. I fancy he's got more than is good for him," and he tapped his forehead significantly.

Wieten Klook gave a loud cry and buried her face in her hands. "Oh! the plough!" she wailed. "I saw it all coming, but couldn't lift a finger to hinder it."

With a spring Jörn Uhl was outside, and found his father lying there. He was lying in the damp grass, half in a pool of water, and was all splashed with mud. His thin hair was saturated with blood, and his muttered words showed that his mind was wandering. He wanted to stay in bed, he said; they ought to go away and do the ploughing, it was too much for him. And then he rambled on about how he had got under the plough while laying the furrows. The chaise had upset, and the horses had dragged the fragments of it along as far as the barn-door, where they were found standing.

His people carried Klaus Uhl into the house and laid him on his bed. Then the doctor was sent for, and he declared that the shock and fright had brought on an apoplectic seizure which had been threatening him for years. He might live to be an old man, and it was possible that with time his condition would improve; but he would never be able to get about again with ease. He would never fully recover his faculties.

Three days later little Mr. Whitehead once more made his appearance at the farm. With a grave look on his face, he went up to Jörn, who was busy feeding the horses. "I have heard of your father's accident, and I've come to ask something of you. If you're agreeable we'll just step into that little room that used to be your bedroom when you were a lad, and sit there with your brothers for a bit."

"I sleep there still," said Jörn.

"Indeed!" said the old man, and took a good look at him. "That's like you. I'm sorry that your sister, Elsbe, has made a very unfortunate marriage, as I hear. She was very friendly and kind to me that time."

Jörn made no answer, but led the way to his little bedroom. Then he went out and called to his brothers to come in. They came with surly reluctance, and a look of disdain on their handsome, arrogant faces. On the way to France, Hinnerk, who was in a tipsy state among some of his sottish companions, had fallen and broken his leg on the railway platform at Düsseldorf, while getting into the train, and he had only himself to thank that he had been unable to take part in the campaign. He was a braggart by nature, a far greater one even than his father had been, for he was without his father's intelligence. He would dearly have liked to go to France with the others, simply so as to be able to boast of his doings afterward. It was intolerable that he could not strike his breast, and speak of his part in the great war. He would have been another of those heroes who, in the first years after the war, used to twirl first one end of their moustache, "'Seventy!" then the other, "'Seventy-one!" Then proudly smiling, with a grand air, both ends together, adding: "Went through 'em both!" Not being able to boast in this way, he had now begun to give free play to his coarser nature. He must needs act the braggart — now more than ever. He must beat the others at it, and he did so by living a dissolute life and indulging in vulgar oaths.

"Now listen carefully to what I've got to say!" said the old man. "I've been sent here by the savings-bank people, and I've come on my own account as well. About twelve years ago we two, the bank and myself, had a rather large sum of money we wanted to invest, and we offered it privately. Your father took the loan, giving this farm, which had been till then

unmortgaged, as security; although the burden was heavy enough, the farm could have stood it. To tell the truth, though, we were surprised at him mortgaging the place so heavily; but he told us he knew of a capital investment for his ready money, and we believed him, for in those days he was thought to be a shrewd, long-headed, well-to-do man, although he was living at a pretty fast pace, and spending a lot of money. But, later on, we began to see plain enough how fast he was going down-hill, and as his sons grew up, they began doing what they could to help him squander his money. So we kept an eye on his affairs, and two years ago we warned him of how things were going. Finally matters got too bad, and now we have had to give him notice that the farm is no longer worth the original valuation. He got the letter three days ago. That same night he met with his accident, and it has injured him, as I hear, so badly that, though he may live on for many a year, it's not likely he'll ever have his full mental powers again."

"So that's the state of affairs, is it?" said Heinrich. "Well! well!" His face had grown white, and his eyes had a sharp, angry look in them.

"Yes, young man, that's how matters stand," said the old gentleman, nodding his head. "And now you can take your choice. Either we'll have to bring the estate into the Insolvency Court, and in that case it's a question whether the three of you wouldn't have to go out into the world without a penny to call your own, or we'll hand the farm over to you, Jörn, regarding it as security for the whole debt, and we'll see what you can make of it. Of course, you'd have to be responsible for the smaller sums that are due, too. And as for you other two, we are willing to give you two thousand marks each, on condition that you agree to quit the farm for good and all. That's the offer we have to make you."

Jörn sat there, gazing at the old chest, and felt happy. "What! is the farm mine?" he thought. "What! am I master here?" And then, as suddenly, he felt ashamed of such thoughts.

Hinnerk beckoned to Hans, and they left the room together, and, as of their own accord, they went to their father's bedside. Wieten Penn, who had been sitting there, left the room when they entered.

They had been wont to come to him only when they wanted a few gold pieces from him. This time their visit was prompted by far different motives. Their father was lying in a deep sleep and did not hear them.

Then Hinnerk broke forth, declaring that old Whitehead was a liar. Things were not so bad as they looked, he said, and they must mind what they were doing and not be too hasty in coming to a settlement. But though they talked for some time in this strain, they did not take long to discover that they had, as a matter of fact, no doubt whatever as to the truth of what they had just heard; so they said no more.

Then they commenced to hurl reproaches at each other: "You've gambled away thirty pounds this winter," and "You've lost pretty well a hundred with your clumsy horse-dealing." They were glaring at each other, and it wanted little more and they would have come to blows. But they began to think about their future, and grew glum and moody again. They had come to that place where a certain one had said, "I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed." And a feeling came over them such as comes over a man when he dreams he has lost both his arms and has to fight his way through the world without them. Hinnerk turned toward the bed and raised his clenched fists, shouting the very words his eldest brother had once used five years before: "What have you ever taught us? But there'll come a day of reckoning yet, man. Hark you! A day is coming when you'll have to pay for your misdeeds, I tell you, as sure as God's in heaven." At that moment he firmly believed in a life beyond this world, and did so because he wished that his father might come to judgment there. Hans stood by the bed mute and motionless. He saw his father's face working and twitching as with the woe of vague and wordless things.

Hinnerk tossed his father's clothes about impatiently, searching for the keys, and, having found them, he unlocked the heavy polished chest that stood in the corner and hunted for money in a drawer with which he seemed familiar. But nothing was to be found there beyond a piece of paper and a little gold necklace of old-fashioned and clever workmanship, to which a seal and a wedding-ring were attached. He opened out the paper and found on it a short column of figures showing the sum of his father's debts. In addition to the

heavy mortgage, there were bills of promise amounting to over £500. Underneath their father had written in a careful copy-book hand, "I am at the end of my tether."

"Ho! ho!" said Hinnerk, "so that's how things stand! Here we've got it in black and white before our very eyes, and I'll wager Jörn needn't expect to be long in possession, either. He'll be badgered and baited to death over these bills, and then they'll wind up by driving him from the farm altogether. It's no use, Hans, we must pack up and be off. There's nothing to be had here. Not a single rotten old board on the whole place can we call ours any longer." He took up the little chain, tore off the pendants and gave them to his brother. Later on Hinnerk lost the chain at cards. Hans, however, has kept the golden trinkets to this day in memory of his mother, and always wore them on his watch-chain even after he had had to sell the watch itself to buy bread for his children.

They took one more look around and went out. Old Whitehead was pacing up and down the big hall, and said to them as they reappeared, "Not found anything? Will you take your hundred pounds, then, after all?"

"Can we get the money to-day?"

"At four o'clock this afternoon our agent will be at the Hollanderei to meet you. He will go with you to the notary."

Then they went out and packed their Sunday clothes up in the little portmanteaus they had once used in their soldiering days. They gave orders that the horses should be harnessed and that Jasper Cray should drive them. Jörn followed the latter into the stable. "The turn-out belongs to me," he said, in a proud, harsh voice, "and I hold you responsible for it. See that you have it back here at the Uhl in good time this evening."

And outside, as they stood beside the buggy, gazing once more over the farm as far as they could see, over the broad fields that lay west of Ringelshörn, and formed the most valuable part of the estate, they grew silent and grave. Hinnerk's face was white as he stood there grinding his teeth. Hans said to his youngest brother, "Father is the most to blame, but we haven't acted as we should, either. It's only right, I suppose, that you should be master here. See that the old

place doesn't fall into the hands of strangers." He turned around and got up into the vehicle.

Then they drove off without casting a single look behind them.

Jörn stood gazing after the buggy for a long time, plunged deep in thought; then he turned toward the door, and found Thiess Thiessen's little thin figure standing there beside old Whitehead.

"Jörn, laddie!" he said. "This old man, that I've known for thirty years and more, has sent to Hamburg for me to come and give you my advice in this fix you're in. Jörn, my lad, as I've always said, what has the past got to do with us? Let the dead rest in peace. What do we want with Wulf Isebrand or with Napoleon? Yes, indeed, I'll say the same of my sister, too. May she rest in peace. And that's enough said on that point. But it's what's ahead of us, Jörn, that we must look to, and look to right well and carefully. We must have a care, Jörn, we must have a care what we do. The things that are still to happen in the world's history, that's what *our* trouble is, Jörn. And as far as you're concerned the rest of the world's history now lies right at your very feet. . . . I was with your father a moment ago, and Wieten has told me everything. Come along inside. Those marplots of brothers of yours are gone. Good sense now reigns at the Uhl. Come, we'll have a cup of coffee, and, what's more, we'll drink it in your little bedroom by the window. I'm to give you kind regards from Lisbeth — a thousand of them, I believe she said."

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN of a sudden some great event like a mighty giant bursts in upon mankind, brushing them with sleeve and garment as it passes, the souls of those who are touched start and tremble and remain quivering with emotion for a longer or shorter time, according to the greatness or suddenness of what has happened. It is then that the nature and character of mortals reveals itself, their tongues grow voluble, and their ears sharper. They are then like land that has been ploughed deep and that sends up a strong odor of the fresh earth.

They were sitting in the little room. Gold-rimmed cups with blue flowers on them were standing on the chest. The two old men had lit their short pipes and began to console the down-hearted youth from the high vantage-ground of their long experience and settled position in life.

"We want to do what we can for you, Jörn," said Whitehead, putting on his pleasantest look; "but at the same time we want our money back."

"Especially the latter," said Thiess.

"At present," the old man went on to say, "the farm is a little too heavily mortgaged; for there are still certain bills of promise to be taken into consideration, and the working plant is none of the best. We should be losing money if we brought the farm under the hammer, so we're going to hand it over to you, my lad."

"You see, you've got to earn the money for them, Jörn," said Thiess.

"Yes, our money for us, and the farm for himself. Then, later on, when prices rise, as they do after every war, he'll be able to work off the debt little by little, till the day comes when he can say, 'The farm's mine!'"

"What do you say to it, Jörn?" asked Thiess.

"What do I say to it?" cried Jörn, and it was the first time

in his life that he made a quick gesture to help out his speech, thrusting out before him his two great empty hands. "Is father to be carried from the farm in his bed? Am I to let the old place go? All that I can do to hold on here, that I promise you I will do. You can make sure of that, Thiess."

"Good!" said Whitehead. "Now let us talk about something else." He puffed vigorously at his short pipe and looked benignantly at Jörn, who was now sitting there with that same old inscrutable look on his face.

"You must marry," he said to Jörn. "It's not a good thing for man to be alone, either by night or by day, in joy or in sorrow. You've a bit of an inclination to fight shy of double harness." And he asked him, half in jest and half in earnest, whether he should choose a mate for him. "I know some nests with golden eggs on the Geest," he said; "you'd be helping yourself and us at the same time, Jörn."

But Jörn only said, "The housekeeper will stay on at the Uhl. A wife I've no need of."

As he said this, the fair-haired Lena had come into the room, bringing a jug of cream for them. She caught the words of the new-fledged young landowner, and gave her head a proud toss as she thought to herself, "Don't we think we're wise, to be sure."

"Do you know what, Jörn?" said old Whitehead, genially. "I knew that housekeeper of yours more than forty years ago. I've a mind to tell you both, but especially you, Jörn, what I know of her young days."

Lena Tarn was about to leave the room, but he said to her, "If you've time, my girl, you can stay and listen, too. It will do you no harm to hear the story. There's something of olden times about it. It might have been dug out of Rudensberg where the old Huns' graves lie. The story's as old as the world and as deep as man's life. It's a long, long tale, but I'll cut it short, and tell you only the parts that have to do with Wieten Penn."

Having said this, the old man opened his eyes wide, took a few pulls vainly at his pipe, and laid it beside him. Lena Tarn sat down near Thiess Thiessen, whom, together with Whitehead, she had seen to-day for the first time, and thought, "They're a queer trio, and no mistake." While the story was being told, she looked from one to the other, with eyes

full of droll fun and curiosity. She was far more interested in these three people with whom she was sitting than in the story itself. But it must be confessed that it was Jörn she looked at most, quietly admiring his long, grave face, with its deep-set, quiet eyes. She looked at him without shyness, but with a kind of trustful curiosity.

"Well, in my young days there lived in Schenefeld a young fellow who had his share of good looks and plenty of pride in him, although he came of poor parents. He and I went to the Board School there together. He had always been fond of horses, and so later on he got a place as stable-boy on a big estate near Schenefeld. He did his work well, and always went about the place looking a bit gloomy and never had a word for any one. He never seemed to show what fire and life there was in him, except when he rode the horses along the track that ran around the farm. The master had an only daughter, and this girl used to gaze at him, and go from one window to another, following him with her eyes as he rode along, and her glance grew bright and her cheeks flushed. But as for him, he had no eyes for anything but his horses. One day, after she had been watching him as usual, she went into the stable just as he had brought the horse in, and was about to groom it, and tried to get him to talk to her a bit. But it was always the same — he spoke coldly to her, but kindly enough to the beasts.

"Then she made up her mind to go one step farther. She wanted to show him that he was on the wrong track if he thought she looked down on him because he was only a servant, and that he must show that he had the pride that belongs to honest poverty. So when a good chance came she said to him, 'I'd like you to know that in my eyes you're better than all the farmers' sons in the land put together.' As soon as she had said it, she rushed away up into the high loft behind the pigeon-house, and didn't come down again for two hours or more.

"It's not rightly known exactly how far this warm-hearted girl went in her admiration for him. Be that as it may, a day came when she threw her arms around her father's neck and told him that for three nights she hadn't closed her eyes, and that she must and would marry the groom. Well, her father

had a soft heart, and she was his only child, so he gave his consent. It's said that he did it with a heavy heart, though.

"Anyhow, it's certain enough that she had let him know too plainly how fond she was of him, and it made him look down on her a bit. She wasn't the sort of girl whose picture he, as every young man does, carried in his heart. She was a soft, dreamy creature, hot-blooded and sentimental. The sort of wife for him would have been a woman with quiet, plain ways, with a big, stately figure, and plenty of womanly dignity, too.

"The very next day after the wedding, he spent the whole morning among his horses, looking them over and sorting them out, and on the following day he drove in to market and bought and exchanged horses. His wife stood at the bedroom window and gazed after him with eyes full of angry tears.

"First a daughter was born to them, and in the course of time a son, but it brought them no closer together; just the opposite, in fact. For now that she had the children around her, he thought he could go his own ways more than ever. They were the ways of a diligent, capable, honest, business man. He went in chiefly for horse-dealing, and made a name for himself in this particular line. His wealth increased, and in the course of years, through having to do with cavalry officers who bought horses from him, he became a man with a good knowledge of the world and of polite and easy bearing.

"The more his affairs prospered the more his inborn disposition prompted him to look upon a steady, sober effort to get on in life as the only aim worthy of an intelligent man. Everything connected with what people call ideals he looked at askance. This one-sidedness was fostered in him, too, by the sight of the soft and fantastic life of sentiment, as he deemed it, that prevailed in his home, and was exhibited in his wife, and before long in his children as well.

"The husband was always away from home, and so the two children were wholly and solely in the mother's hands. They didn't go to school, but their mother taught them at home. There wasn't much of the schoolroom style about the way she taught them, but, all the same, the children got on so well that the school authorities had no reason to interfere. They were taught chiefly by means of the tales and fairy-stories that their mother told them, and which they had to repeat

to her in their own words. And she made it a rule that the books containing these stories should remain locked up in a cupboard, and never permitted the children by any chance to take one into their hands. All their pleadings to be allowed to see these books were in vain. Sometimes, on fine days in summer, or on holidays, the three of them would dress up in finery that had belonged to their grandparents, and that lay in a trunk in the attic; so they decked themselves out in grand costumes, acting the tales they had so often heard. Or again they would go, clad in their simple every-day clothes, into the woods, and pass away the afternoon in some glade, sitting camped around a fire, pretending to be gipsies or fugitives or anything else that happened to occur to them. And in these games and rambles they always used to let a little orphan girl, who lived with them, take part. She had been handed over from the poorhouse to help at the farm. And her name was Wieten Penn.

"It seemed like the life in some happy fairy-tale. Human life itself, in all its fulness of promise and strength, and all its gay and manifold variety, was here environed with a world that for other eyes seemed out of joint, but which was, in truth, fraught with freer and deeper significance for those who could see deeper.

"In this sort of make-believe the lonely wife found some small substitute for the lost love of her husband. He would only shrug his shoulders or make some satirical remark, and then go away to his business, forgetting all about his wife and children amid the affairs of the day.

"The mother was blind to the way in which the boy, who had inherited far too much of her peculiar nature, was sinking deeper and deeper into a world that existed only in dreams. Had he lived it is certain that people would have heard more of him. He had such a quick insight that the nature of things was as clear to him as crystal. But he was absolutely without will of his own and had no father's hand to guide him. So he grew up like we often see a young pear-tree do when it's never pruned, far too slender and pliable.

"The mother was gradually sinking into weak health, but she was too inert and also too shy to get a doctor's advice; so, after a long, wearisome illness, she died. At that time the

girl was about sixteen years of age, and the boy and Wieten Penn were about fourteen.

" From the time that their mother's eyes were closed, the three children were left to drift helplessly. As long as the dead body remained under the roof they wandered aimlessly about the house, and were afraid to look at their father, who seemed quite a stranger to them. When evening came they would slip away up to the attic with Wieten Penn, and take out the old clothes that they had so often played with, and would consult softly with each other as to which game they would play. The boy straightway forgot his dead mother. His eyes would gleam and he would give way to all sorts of fantastic pictures that thronged upon his mind. He would fling the robes around him, and in this guise would be for going down into the big room where they had always played, until the others called to him not to make so much noise.

" But when the day of the funeral came, and the whole house was empty, — no one but their father's sister had stayed at home, — the children ventured forth, and, having dressed themselves in their fantastic costumes, slipped into the room where, only half an hour before, their mother's coffin had stood, and where flowers and wreaths were still lying scattered about, and there, with hushed voices, they began to play. Their mother had always taken such innocent pleasure in their games when she played with them there, and in these last weeks she had even talked to them about death, as if she were being invited to some garden festival in May. And so it never occurred to them to think that they could be slighting her memory by indulging in their games.

" So they played on, forgetting how late it was, and were still in the midst of their game when their father came back from the funeral. He was in a bitter mood, for the minister, in his sermon at the grave, had plainly said that the dead woman had been driven into her lonely and almost eerie life by his coldness and reserve. He had no sooner returned home than his sister told him where the children were and what they were doing. When he heard this he cast the remnants of his self-restraint to the winds, and all sense of justice forsook him. In his blind rage the thought took possession of him that these were the wretched children that his wretched wife had brought him. Unobserved, he approached the open window and watched

them awhile at their play; then he went in and chastised the terrified boy whom he recognized as the leader, and then locked the three of them up in the chaff-room.

"Henceforth he kept the children under with a stern hand. Rightly thinking that they must not be left so much together, he made the girl busy herself all day long, under her aunt's direction, with household tasks. The boy had to plough, and go and fetch in the cows, and put his hand to any work that might arise. But the lad soon showed that he hadn't the slightest natural aptitude for such affairs; he took hold of things so clumsily, and could never arrange the parts of his work properly together, but would stand there helpless till some farm-laborer showed him, with a grin, how easy the thing was. Often when his spirit would fain have opened itself to all sorts of kindly and genial impressions, such moments of helplessness and clumsiness would come and bring upon him the laughter and jeers of those around him, and his soul, which dwelt in a house so clear and light and airy, would, in its terror and dismay, shut all the doors and veil the windows and sit brooding in the gloomy, haunted rooms. Sometimes on quiet Sunday afternoons, when the children managed to get up into the attic together, he used to rummage among all the frippery there and take the gay mantles and the paper crowns, which make folk happier and are therefore truer than many a one of gold, and the red shoes with their tiny bells, and would gaze at them long and dreamily. Then he would lay them away again in their places, the tears running down his cheeks.

"That spring-time — it was toward the middle of the month of April, when Spring is longing to break forth, but cannot, because of the cold winds that hurl themselves upon her every night and thrust her back — that spring-time, I say, the boy had to plough all day long in a big sloping field that lay at some distance from the village. On the lower slope lay a stretch of land in which, between the high grass and all sorts of underwood, a number of deserted marl-pits lay, full of deep water. The folk thereabouts, and particularly the children, used to avoid the place, for it was held to be eerie — and haunted and eerie it really was. The waste uneven ground was all overgrown with wild, rank weeds, and these steep-sided pits, in which, far below, lay the still unruffled water, aroused

in people the mysterious feeling that the earth had here great gaping wounds that men had left untended, and it seemed as if in those dark hollows there might lurk evil gnomes, waiting to avenge the wrongs of their mother-earth.

" For three whole days he ploughed there, taking his dinner with him in the morning and returning at night. Each evening he came home sad. On the third day it happened that the children had a short hour that they could spend together in the attic, and there, after sitting silent for a long time, he told his two playmates how, early in the morning, before the sun had risen, and again in the evening, when it had sunk behind the hill and the mirk was gathering over the marl-pits, he had heard a voice that seemed to come from a wild, deserted spot there — it might be the voice of a girl or a feeble old woman, but it always cried, ' Come here, come here! '

" He had got up on hearing it, and was so full of fear that he had had to wipe the drops of sweat from his brow, but all the same he longed to go toward it. Fear and love had drawn him first one way and then another. When he had told them this, he rested his head on his hand and looked at them.

" At first his sister shook her head when she heard the story; then a tremor ran through her, as if one of the monsters out of the depths of the marl-pits had been making a clutch at her, and for awhile she looked at her brother with scared eyes. Then she suddenly broke into a loud laugh, and declared the whole affair to be nothing but a pack of nonsense.

" For since her mother's death a great change had taken place in her. The daily tasks which she had now to do, and which brought her into contact with all sorts of people, awoke and strengthened in her nature everything that she had inherited from her father. What had terrified and darkened the soul of her brother, who was of a more delicate and unpractical nature, she approached, as girls do, tactfully and gracefully and with frank curiosity. Like one who wakes from some oppressive dream she looked into the real life around her, and it filled her with delight. But not being able to shake off all at once the influence of that old fantastic world, she, so to say, took the king's mantle and the red shoes with the bells on them with her into her new life. Into it she went reeling rather than walking, still half-drunk with sleep, and all the more so because she had inherited a considerable part of her

mother's passionate nature. She had also got her young brown eyes from her, that were always full of a soft, limpid brilliance. But she found her life's happiness for all that. She came across a young man belonging to the village, a poor tradesman's son, who had come back home during his convalescence, after having made his first deep-sea voyage as third mate. He had been taken ill while abroad. The young people met one day on a lonely path through the fields, and had exchanged a few foolish words. They had become so smitten with each other, that all the rest of the world was hid in a fog as far as they were concerned. And so she couldn't but laugh, now that she was free from that unreal world of fantasy, when she heard her brother's tale. Soon afterward she went out of the room, away down into the apple orchard, where the third mate was standing waiting behind the thick sloe-bushes. Their other playfellow, however, little Wieten Penn, listened with glowing cheeks and open mouth to the lad's tale, in which those mysterious powers that had hitherto stood mute and with closed eyes, far off in the mists, now for the first time called with voice and glance. And Wieten felt so fond of the lad, too, because he was kind and clever and had such strange, brilliant eyes. She had grieved deeply that of late she had so seldom been able to speak to him, and one night she had stood at his bedroom door, wishing to talk to and play with him. And now, unknown to herself, she was glad that his sister had left the room and that there was a mysterious something in common between them. She said how sorry she was that he looked so pale and sad, and began shyly to stroke his cheek, and at last she kissed him. That pleased him more than anything. For although there had been so much talk about kissing in the pieces they had played, he had never really known what it was. Now, after their childish fashion, they tried it for themselves, first this way, then that, to see which was best, and grew fervent and laughed and were like angels in heaven. And this trustful child would almost have kissed him into health again with her young rosy lips, but that he had too much of his mother's weakness in him. He relapsed into his fit of brooding and fear, trembling and asking, 'What am I to do? Shall I go if it calls again?' Then she promised him that she would run across the next morning from the cow-paddock where she would be milking, and see

how he was getting on. That same night he implored his father to give the work in that field to some one else, but did not speak of the cause of his request. The father saw the boy's fear, but determined by dint of austerity to force him under the yoke of his so-called 'life's work.' The boy's request, which reminded him of old guilt, was refused with a contemptuous shake of the head.

"And so the catastrophe happened.

"It was a cold, raw, gloomy morning in spring. Broad banks of fog still lay like monstrous sluggish animals, dull and inanimate, in the hollows of the fields, and yet some dim spirit of life seemed to be gently stirring over the land. It seemed as if multitudes of young creatures, bound in sleep, were awaiting some whispered word of the Creator. The west wind was blowing softly and evenly in from the sea, like the prelude to a play that is about to begin, but the Night was still queen, and her Terrors still held sway, — princes greedy to do the deeds of darkness before the sceptres should drop from their hands.

"Then came Wieten, hastening straight across the fields toward the paddock where the lad was at work. He was at that moment ploughing down-hill, and so did not notice her. He was walking with feverish steps behind the horses. His body was bent forward as if he was listening to something. Then he suddenly shook his head and clenched his fists, letting go of the plough-handles. She thought he was talking to the horses, as ploughmen often do, and came nearer and nearer to him. But all at once he raised both hands, crying, 'I'm coming, I'm coming!' and with a few bounds he reached the underwood. In the dim light she saw him plunge forward and disappear. Then she lost consciousness and fell. The sun rose.

"An hour later a dairymaid came to the field to look for her, guessing that she had run over to the ploughman and was loitering there after children's fashion. There she found the team of horses standing motionless without a driver, and the child lay face downwards in a fresh-turned furrow, not far behind the plough. She was restored to consciousness, and, trembling and weeping, told them what she had seen: After that she lay for many days tossing in fever. Toward noon they found the lad drowned in one of the marl-pits."

Old Whitehead took up his pipe, and held out his hand toward Thiess, without saying a word. Thiess understood and struck a match for him.

"Why make a long story of it? His father came home late that evening and found the boy lying on two boards in the big room. He bent over the body with an intent look, then gradually straightened himself up again. On the day of the funeral, when his neighbors would fain have expressed their sympathy, he said, 'What's the good? My wife and her son were two useless, unpractical people. Down there in the silence and stillness of the grave they're in their proper place.'

"A week later he heard about his daughter's love-affair, and in short, harsh words he bade her give her lover up. She, however, was as stubborn as he, and told him she meant to be happier than her poor mother, and refused to break with him. So he drove her from the house.

"From this time on he went down-hill fast. For eight weeks of wretchedness Wieten Penn, an inexperienced child, was in the house alone with him. He neither looked at her nor deigned to speak a word with her. At first he was nearly always away from home, trying to buy and deal as he had done of old. But, as he sought to get the assent of those he dealt with to his stern and gloomy thoughts, his business friends one by one withdrew from him. In their place came men of shady character, forcing themselves on him, taking pains to agree with him, and leading him still deeper into darkness and defiance. At last he beheld himself enmeshed by evil as by a serpent, but blood-guiltiness and obstinacy prevented him from breaking his bonds. As it became clearer to him that his struggle was a struggle against the Eternal, against what lies at the very foundation of all things, and that this struggle being against human nature must be vain, he conceived a horror and disgust of himself and his life. The poor child dwelt four days and four nights more, alone with him in that house. Full of bitter fear and foreboding, she saw him wandering restlessly from room to room, and heard him talking desperately to himself. On the fifth morning she found him dead.

"That, Jörn, is the story of Wieten Penn's girlhood, the woman who is now sitting at your father's bedside. She came down to the Marsh and took service here at the Uhl.

Owing to all the fearful things she had seen, her youth was broken off like a flower. She saw apparitions and had what people called second sight, and became distracted and gloomy. Silly folk gave her the name of Wieten Klook, and so did what they could to drive her back into herself. But your mother, Jörn, who was kind-hearted and trustful, took her by the hand and helped her. Yet she's always remained strangely serious, and is often pensive and dejected. She's not the proper sort of companion for a man like you, Jörn — for you have the same heavy blood in you as she. You need a good young helpmate, especially now that you've got a difficult task before you."

Having ended his story, Mr. Whitehead took his walking-stick and said it was time for him to be going. He had the horses put into the buggy and drove into the town along with Thiess Thiessen. Jörn Uhl went to his father's bedside and released Wieten Penn. As she left the room he cast a long look at her.

He spent the night in the big armchair in which his mother had sat on winter nights, watching by his father's restless bed. As he sat there pondering, his thoughts wandered away in two different directions. Now he considered how he would arrange this or that on the farm, and wondered what the future would bring forth; and anon he was in the midst of the strange and shocking events that old Whitehead had been talking about.

And gradually, as the darkness of night grew deeper and midnight came, he heard the west wind soughing and rustling in the poplars and driving the rain like scourges against the window-panes, and saw the sick man gazing with vacant eyes at the ceiling; and he thought of the doctor's words, "Your father may live a long while in this condition, but he will never regain the use of his limbs." Then for the first time there came into Jörn Uhl's soul the feeling of the insufficiency of mortals' strength, the feeling of man's need, the feeling, "Whither canst thou flee, O my soul, in thy great distress and loneliness?" And now it was a good thing for him, after all, that he had once heard of the "Father, which is in heaven," when he was a lad at school, else he might in that hour have been filled with fear of the dark towering forms which stood scowling around him in the night, and might perchance have

worshipped them. But now, in his hour of fear and faith, he turned to those unseen, strong, and blessed powers which are in the Gospel.

And that was a mighty step for this Jörn Uhl, who had hitherto been so self-confident, to take. For, as a wise man has rightly said, it is to the humble alone that God's grace is given. Only to those who seek earnestly and ask questions, many and serious — only to those who admire and wonder and humbly worship, do the gates open that lead to a fair, wide humanity. To the heights and depths of human life, in all their wonder and beauty, only the simple and ignorant attain.

CHAPTER XVIII.

On no other farm in all the Marsh was such hard work done as at the Uhl that summer and autumn. Every morning at four o'clock, when the watchman made his last round, he would stand for a moment on the so-called Westereck, and blow the three prescribed blasts on his horn in the direction of the Uhl, and wonder to see lights already moving in the long stables, and the glow of flames on the hearth of the homestead.

Jörn Uhl ruled with an iron hand. That night, to be sure, he had fallen to praying, but now it was no longer prayer but work that filled his thoughts and his life. His nose seemed to have taken a more imperious curve, and his deep-set eyes seemed to dart still sharper glances from their depths. He grew somewhat taller and gaunter and austerer in his ways. His nickname of Provost, that had been forgotten for seven long years, now came up again on the farm. Nor did all these changes come about without offence to one and another, and many a bitter word. Jock Ebel, known in the village as "Hm" Ebel, and who had stood for thirty years and more in the ditches of the Uhl, came in a bad temper into the servants' room one evening when Jörn Uhl was in the act of paying off a man who had refused to do the task set to him. "It's not in human nature to stand it," he said, "it's not in human nature to do what the farmer wants of us. I've seen a good deal in my time, I can tell you. In the year 'fifty I was blown up with the arsenal at Rendsburg, but I came down again all right that time — hm, yes, that I did."

"Well, and what are you driving at?" asked Jörn Uhl, feigning surprise, though he had long feared that it would come to this.

"If the master . . . if the master thinks he's going to grow rich in three days, why, let him, I say, let him. But I don't

see as how that's any reason why I should work the skin off my fingers for him, all the same." He wiped the edge of his spade and went off. Nor did he put in an appearance next day, but sent his little ten-year-old daughter over. She had an idea that she ought to speak High German in the big stately farm-hall with its dim solemn light, where the tones of her voice sounded so grand and fine; so she said, "My father's compliments, and he's cleared out, and isn't coming back again. He's gone along with Krischau Luhr and his bullocks to Husum." And with that she squeezed out of the door. It was a great moment in the life of this poor laboring man's child, to be able to say such big words in that great room with its flags of black and white marble, and its high carved chests and cupboards. For years and years after she could hear the wonderful tone of her voice as those walls had echoed it back. But now she is happily married, and has a good-tempered husband, and might well venture a loud word or so if she would. Yet she always speaks in a humble voice, as if she still feared the echo of the words she had used that day at the Uhl. Her husband once asked her where she got her quiet ways and her soft voice, and whether it had aught to do with that day at the Uhl. She pondered a little before answering, then she said, "No; I'll tell you where I got it. For two years, whilst father lay sick, I had to go begging. And in many a farmer's hall I had to do my begging in humble enough tones, and that's how it is." As she had said that, she threw herself into her husband's arms and laughed.

The two ploughmen at the Uhl resisted Jörn's efforts to spur them on with a pertinacity equal to his own, and many a harsh word fell between them.

"When you've filled in the forenoon up till twelve o'clock with a little ploughing, you reckon you've earned your dinners, I expect?"

Then the elder of the two spoke up: "And if you had your way, sir, we'd have worked ourselves to death before twelve o'clock every day, and wouldn't want any dinner at all."

At this the boy, who was seated on the back of the near horse, could not help laughing. But the tall farmer, with two long, quiet strides, came up to him and gave him a slap that left his ear red for the rest of the day. Directly the

Provost was out of the way, however, he laughed again, with his roguish eyes full of tears.

It seemed as if things would not go well in the kitchen, either. Almost all day long Wieten had to be at the sick man's bed, for he would grow restless and cry like a child when she was absent. And then the maids in the kitchen did not care about carrying out Lena Tarn's orders. Jörn talked the matter over with Wieten, and they both agreed that it was better for Wieten herself to give up all her time to nursing the old man, and while sitting at his bedside she could go on with her knitting and mending and sewing, as usual. The kitchen and dairy, on the other hand, were to be under Lena Tarn's control, but in important matters she could come in and consult Wieten.

"Yes, that's a good arrangement, Jörn. It'll be a comfort for me, too, to have that load off my shoulders. I'm sixty now."

So Jörn, with a stern, proud look on his face, and with determined lips, went into the kitchen, and, in a few words, made things clear to the assembled petticoats. Lena Tarn, who was standing washing up the dishes, with her sleeves rolled up showing her white arms, gave a short nod of assent with her fair head, without stopping in her work, not so much as looking around at this most deliberate speaker. The second servant, however, shot out of the kitchen like an arrow, slammed the door after her, and left the farm that same afternoon.

Winter drew on apace. Jörn Uhl, with his long legs and heavy stride, went about his fields thinking over a plan he had of draining part of the farm-lands, and of carrying out the work himself in order to save wages yearly. He measured it off, like a certificated surveyor, and took the grades, and sat in his room drawing up a plan of the whole farm, which now belonged to him.

Spring came. May-day brought new people to the farm who knew nothing of the young farmer's sudden rise in the world, or of Lena Tarn's promotion. From that time forth things went better. Jörn's voice rang surer and fuller across the farmyard, and he was able to go to Wieten Penn, who sat at the window looking out over her spectacles at the farm, and say to her, "That Lena is making a fine job of it. There's

go and gumption in her. You can be quite easy about the way she's managing."

Then came the tenth of May. The clear sun hung white in the blue depths of the sky, and the vapors mounting from the earth were pierced and transfigured with his light. Away in the distance, along the North Sea dikes, the mist lay bluish white. Old Dreyer passed by the farm that day, striking his walking-stick firmly and cautiously on the ground at every step. "Jörn," he said, "this is the one and twentieth time that I have brought my cattle out to the pastures on the tenth of May." Jörn waited till the old man had vanished in the distance, then he shouted into the big hall so that it rang again: "Come, let us drive the cattle out, and you womenfolk can help, too." And thereupon forty oxen, two and three year olds, strong beasts, were led, one after another, to the door, and let loose. They took the great farmyard by storm, and filled it as children do a playground with a shuffle of feet and the sound of their cries. With five men they managed to master them. Mighty was the sound of Jörn Uhl's voice, and mighty were the cracks of his great stock-whip. He stood at the top of the rise, in front of the big barn-door, and pointed out the way. At last they were all got out of the yard, and brought to the dike road. Two of the men went with them. It was a relief to every one.

The ten horses which were then let out were led away by the head man and one of the youngsters. Two foals trotted prettily behind, and the cavalcade was brought up by the old mare that had come from the Haze with Jörn's mother as a kind of supplement to her dowry, for a mare had been promised to the daughter of Haze Farm. This mare was permitted to finish its days in peace at the Uhl.

Then came the cows, eight in number; big, red, speckled marsh cows. Just behind the house, in an old meadow that had never seen the gleam of a ploughshare, they had their pasture, so that they might be handier for the milkmaids. The women led them. A ploughboy who tried to catch one of them, although he went about it craftily enough, was treated with scant ceremony. The rope was torn from his hands, and he got full proof that he was but a clumsy fellow. And in this fashion the milkmaids, with Lena Tarn in front in all her stateliness, went down the Wurt. The sunlight, finding its

way through the branches of the poplars, set her hair all afire, till it gleamed like the coat of the red cow walking on in front of her.

But an interruption occurred. The big three-year-old bull had managed to break loose, for he had found the fast-emptying stable too monotonous for his taste. He suddenly appeared standing at the stable door, and came sauntering calmly over toward the women and cows. It was a fortunate thing that Lena Tarn, who thought of everything, had brought the three-legged milking-stool with her. She confronted him with blazing eyes, and cried, " Stop, you good-for-nothing! " for she was no friend of his, and threatened him with the stool. But the bull took not the slightest heed, but came on, looking the picture of assurance, strength, and defiance. Lena Tarn threw a quick look, full of biting scorn, at the men-folk who were standing, whip in hand, higher up near the barn door. " Why are you standing there, you butter-fingers? " she cried; and, raising the stool, she brought it down with a crash on the bull's head. This gave him such a start that he made off in the other direction, where he fell into the hands of the men. All that afternoon Lena Tarn's cheeks would redden and pale alternately at the thought of the glance the young farmer had cast at her, and she was full of a secret joy, mixed in some strange way with fear.

Last of all came the calves, more than twenty of them. They behaved worse than so many school-children, and that is saying a good deal. Six of them that had been born in the stable and didn't know what water was, or earth, or air, tried first of all to fly, springing high with all four legs in the air at once, and then stood stiff-legged and riveted to the spot with astonishment that they should come down to earth again. They could not get over their amazement, and could not be persuaded to budge. Presently two of them discovered the big ditch and sprang into it with a mighty leap. The youngster who had hold of their rope got no time to reflect whether it would be better for him to throw in his lot with theirs, or whether it was wisest to part company. So he had to jump with them. And there stood the three of them up to their necks in the dark water, all three overwhelmed with astonishment, gazing helplessly at each other.

Then the farmer got angry. He scolded " that young block-

head," as he called him, who didn't know how to blow a cow-horn yet, laid his whip down near the wall, and came striding down from his eminence and went in among the men and cattle. It was high time, too, to put a stop to the hubbub, for the girls were standing by the stable door screaming with laughter, and Lena Tarn stood by the hedge-gate with a contemptuous look and a frown on her face. Half-way down the slope he caught hold of the halter of the chief offender, who had not yet recovered from his astonishment and was staring stupidly around him, and tried to lead him away. But just at this very moment a thought occurred to the beast, some inspiration or other, and he went helter-skelter down the steep Wurt. Away went Jörn's cap. The earth trembled. The kitchen wenches shrieked. There was a bold leap and a great splash, and there stood the whole five of them in the water, all five wondering what was the matter. . . . At last everything was got into order, " because we lent a helping hand," the girls declared, and at last silence again reigned on the farm.

Lena Tarn went back to the kitchen. The look on Jörn Uhl's face as he saw her brandishing the stool at the bull haunted her. Generally she was merry enough, but in the last few days she had been somewhat unwell, and this had made her rather ill-tempered. Her face now wore a slight frown, and she even strove to look as sour as she could. But as soon as she began to go about her work and felt that new, fresh health was streaming through her limbs, her face completely changed. She went hastily to her room, unlocked her door, and presently came back. Her eyes were bright and half-shut, blinking roguishly in the sunlight. She smiled thoughtfully to herself, and suddenly when she thought of the young farmer's plunge in the water she burst out laughing and began to sing.

Neither did Jörn Uhl quite recover his peace of mind that day. His sharp plunge into the water had roused his blood, and the spring sunshine did its share too. It blew the strength of youth into men, and forced them to breathe deep, and look into the gay world; to lay their heads back and try to find the lark, singing its heart out somewhere high up in the sky. He had a feeling that it was a sort of holiday, and he thought he might keep it by going into the village to

pay the taxes that were due. So he put on his Sunday coat and walked slowly across toward the village, looking at the lusty young wheat and thinking of Lena Tarn the while. "Her hair is piled up on her head like a helmet of red brass that's slipped down on to her neck, just like the one that French cuirassier had on the back of his head. I remember how he sat there on a tree-stump with a hayband bound around his thigh, that evening at Gravelotte. When she's 'busy,' as she says, she just keeps her eyes fixed on her work and hasn't a look for anything else, but if you begin to talk to her, or if she's talking to any one, her laughter comes bubbling out like a spring. She seems to think that one ought never to be grave and serious except when one's working. 'It's the natural way of things,' she says. There's no betwixt and between with her. She'll either be downright angry about a thing or downright good-tempered. Mostly the last, though; except to me, that is; for she's often pretty short with me, and often as not real snappy. It was a great joke for her to see me careering into the water with that mad brute of a bull. If only she dared, she'd like mightily to remind me of it three or four times a day, out of sheer devilment."

As he went along with such thoughts running through his head, he met old Dreyer. Old Dreyer was a man who would never walk along the broad street that ran through the middle of the village, but always preferred the paths where he had green grass under his feet and could have ploughed land on both sides before his old eyes. The young farmer slowed down, so as to let the old man with his sober gait walk along beside him, and listened, as he had so often done, to his scraps of wisdom and good advice, which were always clenched by an appeal to things that had happened in their own times or, often enough, in the lives of their fathers before them.

"And above all things, Jörn, — how old are you? Twenty-four? Don't go marrying, Jörn! Not under no circumstances whatever. That would be just the foolishest thing you could possibly do at present. Every time of life has its follies, Jörn, and yours would be marrying. For my own part, I waited till I was in the thirties, and then I made a careful choice. She brought six thousand marks with her, Jörn, and that was a deal in those days. You daren't do it

under fifty thousand, Jörn. Give yourself plenty of time, lad, that's my advice to you."

"Of course. I'll do well to wait at least another ten years," said Jörn; "that goes without saying. Wieten's hale and hearty yet, and can look after things for many a day to come."

At the bend of the road he bade the old man good day and hurried on, thinking to himself, "The old chap's not so clear-headed as he used to be, not the slightest doubt about it. I noticed it to-day more than usual. Beautiful mild air it is to-day. It's pleasanter to walk by oneself, by a long chalk, and let one's thoughts go helter-skelter where they will, just like the calves did this morning, than to tramp along with old Dreyer listening to his words of wisdom. By this time I ought to know pretty well what's the sensible thing to do. I haven't frittered away my time without getting a single thought into my head like those brothers of mine. As for marrying, that is, just at present, I mean, just catch me at it. Time enough after I'm thirty." He took off his coat and hung it over his arm, and his white shirt-sleeves shone like those of the good son in the parable when he was returning home from the fields and heard the singing and dancing.[1]

"She looked fine when she let the red bull have the stool at his head. Like a three-year-old horse when it rears. She didn't look so nice yesterday, though, and her eyes weren't so bright. She spoke crossly to Wieten, and then said to her afterward, 'Don't be annoyed, Wieten, I've not slept well,' and laughed. Queer creatures they are! Not slept well? When a body has buzzed about the whole day, as she has to do, she ought to sleep like a log. But I suppose it's got something to do with Maytime. I can only say it's a good thing that the men-folk keep reasonable, else the world would get clean out of joint every spring-time.

"Wonderful air! It seems as if one was drinking it, and it tastes good, too. It's a good thing after all that I came home safe from the war, and that I'm still young and have the big farm, so as to show them what's in me. And later on, when I've got a firm seat in the saddle, I'll choose a bonnie wife for myself, with plenty of money and yellow hair. There are rich girls, too, that are just as lively and fresh, and look just as taking and stately. New girls are always shooting up every

[1] *Vide* St. Luke xv. 25. (Translator's Note.)

year as thick as young grass. Heaven alone knows where they all come from. There's no need for it to be this particular one."

He put on his coat again and entered the long lane of lindens that ran through the village. The parish clerk, who was so hard of hearing, was standing there before his door, not in the best of moods. For in the course of the day there had been no fewer than six births registered, and each father had sat a full hour in the comfortable easy-chair, and discussed the state of things in the village and in the world in general, his neighbors and the schoolmaster, and had wound up with a long account of his own doings. And all the while the parish clerk had sat there thinking, "There's something better you could be doing than everlastingly bringing new children into the world, giving me so much trouble every year with all this scribbling on your account. Man! you ought to just go away and mind your ploughing, I tell you."

"Uhl," he said, "one would have thought that the war would have caused a falling off, but, bless me, not a bit of it! Just the opposite. Four men of our parish fell in France, but what difference does that make? Why, there's six christenings for to-day alone. And at Jen Tappe's, who got his arm shot off at Le Mans, there's something on the way again already. We won't have more than fifty deaths this year, Jörn, but over a hundred births. Where's the food to come from? Can you tell me that? The country doesn't grow any bigger, and every cow needs six bushels. The public's growing too fast, Jörn, far too fast! But, bless me! come inside, man." So he chatted on, and with blinking eyes counted over the gold pieces that Jörn laid on the table, turning each piece over twice, and then he entered the sum carefully in the accounts.

Jörn Uhl, as a rational being, as a taxpayer, and as the holder of a large farm, thought these views perfectly correct, and talked the whole matter over with the parish clerk. "What the deuce is to be the end of it if people go on increasing at that rate?" And finally he said, emphatically, "Marrying under twenty-five will simply have to be forbidden." And with these words he departed, full of the proud consciousness that he was of the same mind as so sensible and experienced a man as a parish clerk in a matter of such great importance.

And again as he went along the path through the meadows you could see his shirt-sleeves gleaming in the distance.

As he turned into the farmyard he noticed a man sitting on the white wooden bench between the lindens. He looked like a laborer wearing his best Sunday coat. He must have been quite sixty years of age, and he had a full, gray beard, and thick gray hair that lay heavy over his forehead, and in spite of his broad, good-humored features he looked like a lion with a gray mane. He had rested both hands on the top of his oaken staff, and was weary and travel-stained. Lena Tarn was standing beside him with a strangely earnest face; she pointed to Jörn, saying, "Here comes the master."

The old man stood up before him and shook hands with him. Then he sat down and began — after the fashion of people in those parts — to talk about the weather and the crops. Lena Tarn brought out the coffee without a word, then sat down opposite them and set to work to mend a cloak that Jörn had brought with him from the war, and that had belonged to a French soldier.

"I have come about a certain matter, . . ." the old man said. "My wife gives me no peace. You used to be in Captain Gleiser's field artillery, usedn't you? Well, Geert Dose was there, too. He worked for you after he'd served his time as a soldier, I've heard. Well, you see, he was my son. . . ."

"He was one of the first to be wounded."

"Well, his mother won't give me any peace. Every evening she wants to know whereabouts his wound was, and whether it's a bad thing — I mean, whether he had to suffer long after he had got it. She fancies about nine days. He was a strong, healthy young fellow, and it must have been hard enough on him. And she'd like to know whether he said anything at the last."

"Yes. . . ."

The old man seemed to have grown a little smaller, and was looking with fixed, mute gaze over his hands into the sand.

"I want you to tell me how it all really happened. They say you were with him at the last. Then I can tell her afterward as much as I think she can bear."

Jörn told him quietly all about Geert Dose's wound and his longing to be home again, and his death, keeping nothing back.

Lena Tarn had never in her life seen or heard anything but such things as happened in her own little village, nor had she ever troubled herself about things beyond its borders. The word "war" had always summoned up before her a great fiery, kaleidoscopic picture, with bright, round clouds up above and burning houses down below, and between them hosts of men running and riding — the general with his breast covered with orders, the soldiers with their hurrahs and waving of helmets, their bivouac-fires and Te Deums. All that she had read in her school-books. Of the gruesome and heartrending misery that soldiers have to go through she had heard nothing. She listened to Jörn's words with face all drawn with pain at the very recital of such woes. But in the depths of her soul a secret joy was all the while dancing and laughing, and she kept saying to herself, "You've come back safe and sound. You've come back safe and sound, Jörn Uhl."

The old man did not say much more. He soon got up and went silently on his way. The farmer accompanied him to the end of the lane, the first and last time that he was ever known to do any one this honor. For a long time he stood looking after the retreating figure plodding along the high-road with stiff and heavy gait. "The old fellow has a long walk of sixteen miles before him, a weary road, and a weary home-coming," thought Jörn Uhl.

Returning through the poplar lane, the pleasantness of the Maytime again came over his spirit. Through the gently swaying trees, now all in tender leaf, he caught glimpses of the sunlit space in front of the long, quiet homestead. He saw its long, lofty roof of dark gray thatch, and its windows glimmering in their green frames. He saw the broad, spreading vine clambering around the door, the white deal seats and little table beneath the trellis, and Lena Tarn sitting there with her proud, saucy air and all the perfume of her fresh, full youth about her.

As he looked, a phrase occurred to him that he had read in some stray newspaper once when he was a soldier away in France on actual service, a flowery Christmas article about Peace, and the Works of Peace. This expression had pleased him hugely at the time, and the beautiful picture of a land at rest now recurred to him. In his clumsy fashion he turned the phrase into question and answer after the manner of the

catechism: "What are the works of peace? — The works of peace are ploughing, sowing, reaping, the building of houses, marrying, and the rearing of children."

Lena sat there with head bowed so low that she did not look like the same girl. The May sunlight was laughing and pointing its radiant fingers at her bowed head. "Look you, Jörn Uhl, look how it sparkles. But have a care lest you touch it, it's all quick with fire." The air lay soft the while, smiling and will-less in the arms of the May-day sunlight, as though faint with its own ecstasy. As Jörn tried to pass her, Lena Tarn, without looking up, pointed to a little blue note-book that lay near her on the table, and said, in a snappish voice, "I just want you to go through the butter accounts with me."

Now, going through the accounts with him was a thing she always did with ill grace, for it seemed to her to imply a certain distrust. It had to be done, though. She gave the note-book another contemptuous push and straightened herself a little. Jörn sat down by her side and began to go over the items, one by one. To show her dislike for such interference, she had written them so badly that he could not make head or tail of some of them. She had to bend her ruddy head over the book that he held in his hand. Jörn was suddenly conscious of a telltale light in his eyes, and tried to frown down these flighty fires. Then with great care and precision he began casting up the figures to see whether Lena Tarn's total were correct or not. She meanwhile was busily engaged in fitting a patch into the old cloak, cocking her head first on this side, then on that, to observe the æsthetic effect of her handiwork, and singing and humming like a bumblebee when perchance it alights on the rim of a buttercup, and to its amazement and indignation finds another already in possession. Before very long he found himself listening attentively to her singing, and his figures began to dance and get all mixed up together. Then he grew angry with himself and got up. "I'll go and finish the sum inside," he said.

"It's the best thing you can do," said she.

In the evening, as twilight was falling, he sauntered along the cross-road to see whether the cattle that had been let out into the open were all right. In former years he could stand by the hour behind his beasts, thinking over their past, and

planning for their future, but this evening he had no eyes for them, and soon turned back home again. When he had reached the farmyard he looked around him, and, seeing nobody, he laughed softly to himself. Late that evening it began to rain. He was sitting in his little room at the open window smoking his pipe, and feeling — as he mostly did at this time, when sitting there beside the big chest in this little kingdom of his — thoroughly comfortable. In such hours a longing for the more genial side of life awoke in him. It was a thing he must have inherited from his mother's side of the family. As a rule, when evening came, he would sit there in the quiet consciousness of a day's work well done, pondering and making plans for the future, portioning his life out in thought, as a child does some big Christmas cake that seems to it so big that it can never come to an end. But to-night Jörn began to brood and philosophize again after his old fashion, thinking how few sunshiny days had been his, and wondering whether things might not be so ordered that he might some day get out of this land of gloom and cold winds for awhile. What had his life been hitherto? he asked himself. He had left behind the cares of his boyhood only to be loaded with debt as a man. He had escaped the field of Gravelotte only to come to new-tilled land, where it was heavy walking. And it was the same with everything else. So when he came to think things over, it seemed to him that it was high time for him to expect to have a little of the softer, milder, and more genial side of life, too.

In the house not a soul was stirring. Outside the rain was trickling and gossiping. A soft twitter of birds came from among the apple-trees. Amongst the bushes there was a feeling as of buds longing to break forth into leaf and blossom. Heavy globules of rain were hanging on every tender stalk, and each crystal drop that fell seemed like some dainty, tiny being sliding earthwards from twig to twig. Jörn looked out into the night and listened. It was, he thought, as though he heard some light spirit of laughter, and the opening of leaves. Around his window multitudes of little creatures were on the wing. Gnats and midges were darting up and down, spiders were on the move, comrades were being sought and found, and each sped on his own particular errand. The figure of the Sand-lass flitted through Jörn's memory, and those proud forms

on the picture lying in the old chest came up before his eyes. He thought and thought, and gazed away into space, and his mind came back to Lena Tarn. He saw her sitting by his side on the white deal seat bending over the book, and saw the gleam of her beautiful neck through the fair, ruddy ringlets. He roused himself from this dreaming and sat up a little straighter on the chair, saying to himself soberly and slowly, "The Works of Peace."

The door creaked on its hinges, and Lena Tarn came in; there she was, standing hesitating on the threshold.

"Come in, Lena," he said. "What is it you want?" He was so excited he could hardly speak.

"I wanted to get the book. I thought you were still away on the roads." She went over, and began looking about the shelf for the book.

Then he spoke to her again, and said: "You haven't been in a very good temper these last few days, Lena. Is there anything you're in want of?"

She tossed her head and said, curtly, "Everybody is in want of something now and then, but it's a feeling that always goes by."

"I suppose you're glad that Wieten's got to sleep with her patient, and that you have your room all for yourself."

"Why? It's all the same to me. When one has a good conscience, it doesn't matter a straw whether one sleeps alone in the room or with somebody else there."

"Then you must have a bad conscience, lassie, for last night when I was coming through the passage I heard you calling out in your sleep."

"Did you? . . . I suppose I wasn't feeling well."

"What nonsense; just fancy, *you* not well. It was the moon that did it. The rascal moon was shining full into your bedroom."

"Oh! it may have been something quite different."

"No! I tell you it was the moon."

She gave him an indignant look. "Oh! a lot you know about it. I didn't call out in my sleep at all, as it happens; it was three calves that had got out, and were jumping about in the garden. I saw them clearly in the moonlight, and it was them I was calling."

He laughed mockingly. "Faith, they must have been moon-calves, with a vengeance."

"Oh! you think so, do you? Well! maybe they were, but this morning I had to take them back, and found the stable door open. I suppose the stableman was away courting last night. Your eyes are always darting about and spying into every corner, so I wonder, Jörn, you didn't notice anything of it!"

"What! do you call me by my Christian name?"

"You do me, too! I am almost as big as you, and you're not an earl, are you? And I'm sure I am just as sensible as you are, if it comes to that." She tossed her head pretty high, and as she snatched the book down from the window-shelf as though she were saving it from the midst of flames, he saw the splendid anger in her eyes.

"Be on your guard against the moon, lassie," he said, "else you'll be having to go calf-hunting to-night again."

He was now standing in front of her, but didn't dare to touch her. But as they looked at each other, each saw plainly how it stood with the other's will. He had again that same look in his eyes that he had had earlier in the day — a victorious, impudent look, as if he was saying to himself, "I just know exactly how such maidens' scorn is to be interpreted." Her eyes said, "Oh, I'm much too proud to love you. Oh, I do love you so!" She still lingered at the far end of the room, as though to give him time to say something more, or to catch hold of her. But he was too dull to think of that, and laughed, in order to hide his confusion.

Night came on. It was a quiet, wonderful night. There was still a sound of whimpering in the trees, like a child weeping softly in bed at night when it has been left alone and is afraid. Now and again there was a glimmer of lightning on the horizon, as when a mother comes into a room with a light to see if the children are asleep. And there was a gentle breath of wind, as when a mother croons a cradle-song. The moon, besides, was shining almost full, her face a little pinched as yet, and stars from all the sky showered down a myriad golden spears, so that all things on earth had to crouch in silence and hide themselves away. Even the people who were still abroad on the roads spoke softly to one another.

Jörn Uhl had sat down. He now got up again, saying,

"I'll just go and have a look at the moon; it's a wonderfully clear night."

He took the high stand that he had made himself, and brought the telescope forth from the old chest. Instead of the old, buckled spy-glass, he now had a fine night-glass with a three and one-half inch objective. One of the masters of the town Grammar School, who had heard of the astronomical leanings of the young farmer, had paid him a visit one day, and had chosen it for him. It was the first and last luxury Jörn had ever allowed himself.

But as he was creeping across the middle hall as noiselessly as possible, he saw that her bedroom door was still open, and she came to the threshold and leaned against the door-post.

"Still up, Lena?" he asked, surprised.

She said, "It's not very late yet."

"The sky is so clear, I thought I'd have a look at the stars; if you feel inclined you can come, too."

At first she did not move, but presently he heard her following him.

He set the tripod in the middle of the lawn, and said, "You ought to have been here last Sunday midday, I had the moon and some of the biggest stars on view."

"You don't say so! Just fancy stars being in the sky at noonday?"

"Of course, lass! Where else could they be?"

"Oh! . . . I hadn't thought of that. I thought they were like night-watchmen, abroad by night and in bed by day."

Jörn shook his head emphatically. "What strange notions you get into that head of yours! But did you really think that was it?"

"Yes," she said, "you don't need to look at me so hard; I really thought it was so."

But he didn't feel sure how to take her. There was a roguish twinkle in the corner of her eyes even when she was in earnest.

He moved the telescope, and began searching over the sky; at last he adjusted it and said, "Now peep in there!"

She was somewhat clumsy about it, so that he laid his hand on her shoulder, and asked, "What do you see?"

"Oh!" she said, "I see . . . I see a . . . a big farmhouse, all afire. It has a thatched roof. . . . Oh! it's all in a blaze,

roof and all. Sparks are flying away over it. It's a regular *old* Dittmarsh farmhouse. . . . Oh! but I would never *have* believed there were farmers and farmhouses in the stars. What's the name of the star, Jörn?"

"Well!" said he, "that's the best thing ever I heard of. No, lass! . . . you've either a screw loose or you're a downright rogue."

"What's the matter now?". said she, looking at him in astonishment.

"You've too much imagination," he said, gravely; "and in science imagination does harm. . . . What else do you see?"

"I see . . . a broad plank at one side of the farmhouse; it's quite dark, for the burning farmhouse is behind it. But I can see deep into the burning hall. Three or four rafters have already fallen in and lie burning on the floor. Oh, that's a dreadful sight. Show me some other house that's not afire. . . . A house and a farmyard I'd like to see where they're just busy driving the calves out."

He burst into a loud laugh.

"You rogue, you," he said, "you'd like to see your milking-stool aloft there in the heavens, too, among the signs of the zodiac, wouldn't you? Like this — raised high above your head."

"It's you that ought to have got the stool at you! I won't forget that day in a hurry, you . . . and the way you looked at me. That you can be sure of!"

He had never let any one take part in his star-gazing. Now he wondered and rejoiced at her delight and amazement. "You never thought of such a thing as that, eh, lass? What you just saw is a nebular star, and his name's Orion. You know, that's the sort of star that's still uncondensed."

She said, catching her breath a little, "I can quite understand what a pleasure it is for you."

He nodded and said, "Now you talk so sensibly, lass, I'll let you have a look at the moon. Just wait a moment."

"Any one would think you owned it all to hear you talk. 'Hi! this way with the moon!'"

He put her into the right position with her eye to the telescope, laying his hand on her arm as though she were but an awkward child.

Now her astonishment knew no bounds.

"What are those big dints in it? Just the same as in our copper kettle, for all the world, when it's polished and hangs over the fire of a morning with the glow on it."

"Those dints, as you call them, are mountains and valleys. Can you see the mountain-peaks away on the edge, to the left? They're lit bright on their left side by the rising sun, and on the right their dark shadows fall over the land."

She shook her head in amazement at all she saw and heard, and lost sight of the vision in the glass and stood upright again, looking up into the sky with her naked eye.

"I used to hear about all these things at school," she said; "about the thousands of miles distance, and the circumference, and all that. But I never believed Dominie Karstens when he told us about it. I knew he didn't tell lies, but I thought it was some traveller's tale somebody had taken him in with. But now I'm inclined to believe it's true."

"Oh, are you! . . . and now you've seen enough and have talked enough wisdom for once. Go back into the house. You'll be catching cold, too, and then you'll be dreaming again and seeing I don't know what in your dreams. Will you be able to sleep?"

"I'll try to."

Again he was tempted to put forth his hand and seize her, but respect for her held him back. He dare not, he thought to himself, take hold of her thus as it were like a highwayman.

"Be quick," he said, "and be off with you."

She went away and left him there. He turned the glass on the middle star of the pole of Charles's Wain, and then back on the moon again, observing the outlines of the seas. He wanted to finish the drawing of a map of the moon he had begun. The time flew by. He was quite absorbed in his task, standing there in the middle of the lawn, flitting noiselessly backwards and forwards about his instrument. He cast aside that stir of young life that had breathed so hard at his side an hour before, and came back into his old tracks, saying to himself that old Dreyer was right. "That's the one folly you must not commit, Jörn!" . . . "And yet — a fine, good-hearted creature she is. . . . Happy the man around whose neck she puts those arms. . . . Her eyes are splendid even now, but what will they be when they are once lit up with love and trust in the man she loves!"

Owls were flying from tree to tree, or sitting on the branches gazing at this night-wanderer with their wide, lidless eyes. A little company of five hedgehogs were squatting by the heap of stones near the alder bushes, quarrelling and making peace again with low grunts. From the fields came the sounds of night, now a cry of some sea-gull, now the far-off lowing of cattle. . . . A chain clanked and jingled against some horse's hoof, and wild geese were flying high away over the farmyard with a soft whirr of wings. . . . He heard it all; but it was all so familiar to him that he did not take its meaning to heart. But suddenly, while the scream of the wild geese went by above him, he seemed to hear not far above the roof and then on the walls of the house the faint cry of a bird and of the weak beat of wings. He looked around and thought: "What! are the wild geese flying through the garden, then?" But while he was still looking in that direction a human form, a woman clad in white, appeared under the eaves of the house, holding one hand over her eyes and groping along the wall as though seeking an entrance where there was no door, and talking to herself the while with quick, excited words: "The calves are in the garden," she was saying; "you must keep a better watch on them; get up, Jörn, get up, I say, and help me."

Jörn Uhl came with a few long strides across the lawn and called her name softly: "I'm here already. . . . It's me. . . . There! there! Now be quiet, lass. . . . It's me. . . . Nobody else is here."

She had suddenly grown silent, and began rubbing her eyes with the back of her hand just as a little child does when it wakes; and all the while she kept complaining after children's fashion. Then Jörn put his arms around her and told her where she was, and led her to the stable door, and tried to comfort her. "Don't you see, here is the stable door. It was here you went through, you old dreamer, you; you've been through the whole length of the stable in your sleep. Have you been after the moon-calves again? Aren't you a goose, eh? . . . There, there, you needn't tremble so. You'll soon be back in your own room now."

When at last she clearly understood her plight, she was terrified and put her hands to her face, uttering cries of shame, "Oh, oh! how dreadful! how dreadful!" But he caressed her and took her hands from her face, and said affectionately,

"Now give over weeping, lassie, and just let things be as they are." So they came to the open door which led into her bedroom.

It must have been a remarkable night; for not only did half the calves break out of the meadow, — and had really to be hunted out of the yard and garden next morning, — but the stableman himself had not come back home at all that night. He came home toward dawn, straight across the fields, humming a tune to himself. When he saw the young farmer, who was striding along by the side of the house with hasty steps and his eyes on the ground as though they were seeking for lost footprints, the latter said, "I am about full up of life in single harness, master. If I can find a good 'un, come Michaelmas, I'll marry her."

After morning coffee Jörn Uhl put on his Sunday coat and went into the village. The parish clerk was in a better humor than yesterday. He no longer expressed his astonishment. As parish clerk, registrar of births and marriages, church accountant, and fire commissioner all in one, he had had many an odd experience. He knew, too, that there's nothing stranger and deeper than a marsh-farmer.

"Right, Uhl," he said, "it isn't good for man to be alone; we must e'en give him a helpmeet, or he'll be in a mess. Maria Magdalena Tarn, only daughter of the Kätner, Jasper Cornelius Tarn, of the village of Todum. We'll write it 'Kätner,' Jörn, although not a soul uses the word in these parts. But in the Prussian printed forms that's the word that's used for cottager nowadays. And as it's the Prussians that have woke us up out of our sleep, I suppose they ought to have the sending of us to work, too. So that's all right. Nineteen years of age! Still young, Jörn. But they get old of themselves, and that's a fact."

When Jörn was coming back, he found as he was passing through the orchard a wild goose lying not far from the stone bridge by the garden gate. It was still alive. He killed it, and took it into the kitchen with him, where Lena Tarn was standing before the fire, with her cheeks all burning. He showed her the bird, and said: "It had broken one of its wings, and was lying on the garden path."

She threw a quick glance at it and said nothing.

"Well," said he, "and now I'd like to know what you think of me, eh?" As she made no reply he came a little closer. "You have always been high-handed enough, especially toward me. Now toss your head and scold me to your heart's content. I've deserved it."

She remained silent, only laying both hands to her temples and gazing into the fire.

He drew one of her hands softly down from her head, and holding it fast in his led her through the hall and out through the door into the front house. She followed him will-less, her eyes bent on the ground, the other hand still up to her head. In the big room he brought her gently to the armchair by the window, and pressed her into it. "There!" he said, tenderly, "now we are all by ourselves, Lena. You're sad, dear lassie, and very angry with me, are you? And is all your pretty laughter gone?" He seated himself on the arm of the chair and began to stroke her hair and cheeks, and her hands which lay in her lap. But she did not look up at him. "Here, in this chair, Wieten says, mother used to sit many a Sunday afternoon. That's your place now."

She still said nothing.

"I've been to the parish clerk's and have arranged everything, and we're to be married in June. . . . Have you still no word to say?"

She clasped her hands and said: "You mean that will make everything right again." And she hid her face in her hands and wept.

Then he began to stroke and kiss her: "Come, come, give over weeping, dearie. Why! aren't you my own dear little sweetheart and bride! Cheer up again, now, do." And not knowing what better to say, he said, "I won't do it again. Only laugh once more." At last, at a loss for any other word of endearment, he coaxingly called her "Redhead." Then she had to laugh; for that was the name of the best cow in the dairy, the one that always stood foremost in the stall. She raised her head, and looked at him long and steadily. . . . And then Jörn Uhl came into the land of softness and heart's ease, which, as he thought, he had long since deserved.

CHAPTER XIX.

It was a happy year. These two young folk were proud of one another, and of the stately farmstead which they managed with such old-fashioned gravity and earnestness. Old Farmer Uhl had never recovered the use of his limbs, but had partly shaken off the first torpor of paralysis, and was able to sit up all day in a large armchair. His appetite returned, and he enjoyed his pipe; he had regained his power of speech sufficiently to make the people in the house understand his growls and exclamations. His youngest son came into the room every day, and walked up and down without looking at the old man sitting there, and reported all that had been done on the farm the day before. His father said not a word. But as soon as his son had left the room, he called everything Jörn did stupid and wrong. When he was in the middle of his abuse, however, Wieten Klook would begin to talk about his wife: "Once, I remember, my mistress said," . . . or, "Once there was nobody at home here, except me and Mistress Uhl, and she grew cheerful and told me this story," . . . or, "I remember just before little Elsbe was born, she that's now been thrown away on that good-for-naught of a Harro Heinsen." . . . Or she would begin praising Lena Tarn and the busy, thrifty way things were managed by her. Then the old man would grow silent and sit there with half-shut eyes, his wry mouth looking still more wry. He had quite lost that gay, jovial way of laughing that had belonged to him in days gone by.

Jörn would be back to work by this; and while he went about his tasks would be worrying about to-morrow and the day after to-morrow, and thinking whether he should sell his corn and his cattle now, or wait awhile, and whether he would ever be able to get together the interest that was due on the 10th November. He was happy and proud enough, no doubt, when he thought of the trust reposed in him, and of the fine

estate given into his charge, despite his twenty-four years, and of the fresh and blithe-hearted, thrifty wife he had by his side. But he never had a chance of enjoying his happiness. He drank of it, as a stag fleeing before the hunters kneels down in haste on the edge of a brook, and then, its thirst half-quenched, has to rush off once more at the sound of horns and hounds growing nearer.

The young wife did not worry. But she worked and worked from morning till night. She didn't spend a penny without having something to show for it. Thiess had given her a few yards of gray alpaca as a wedding-present. Out of it she had made two simple dresses, with wide sleeves that could be tucked back from the wrists. In these dresses she now worked, healthy and merry, and every day looking prettier, her arms well browned and bare to elbows, and as she worked she hummed and sang.

Now she was in the kitchen. "Gretchen," she would say, "look smart now! The quicker you are with your hands the quicker you'll get a husband."

"Faith! and a nice thing to have when you've got him!"

"What! when he's a good one?"

"Are there good ones?"

"Minx, do you want to make out that my husband's not good?"

"Oh, him! The farmer!"

"Now just hold your tongue! Do you think I am going to banter words with you about my husband, then? But look to it how you catch one for yourself, lass; I tell you it's a piece of work. . . . Now I must be off to the calves."

Now she was in the byre with the youngest calf. "They've taken you away from your mammie already, you poor little Redhead. Drink, or I'll give you such a whacking. I am your stepmother. That's right. . . . That's the way to do it. Had enough? well, lie down and sleep, then. Shall I sing you a lullaby? I know cradle-songs enough, God wot, for the time I shall need them. Don't look at me so stupidly, Redhead, I tell you I have got no time. When the farmer comes by with those long legs of his, remember me to him and tell him he's a rogue. When you're bigger you'll have to lead him a dance down into the old moat, like your brother

did last year. He has deserved it of me. A pretty pass he's brought me to."

And while she was standing by the wash-trough the little children of the workmen came by and commenced chatting with her. They talked on quietly for a time, then suddenly the children pricked up their ears. They had heard a low chirping.

"Oh, Neusche" (that means "neighbor"), "what little bird is that that goes cheep, cheep?"

"Listen."

"Oh, Neusche, where's the little bird that goes cheep, cheep?"

"Listen, again."

"Oh, Neusche, you've got the little bird that goes cheep, cheep, there in your breast!"

Then she knelt down before the children and opened the bosom of her dress, and showed them a little chicken she had found half-frozen to death, and which she was warming between her breasts. It cheeped away as she set it down, still wrapped in a little woollen cloth.

The children were astonished, and Lena Tarn laughed and said, "Children, you must tell your mother, 'Mother Neusche's got a little bird that goes cheep, cheep!'" Now, that's the way people in those parts have of saying that a woman is with child.

Toward the end of harvest the thrashing-machine came into the village. There was a miserly auld wife who had, as she thought, paid too dear for her silk skirt. So she determined to make it up out of the wages of the thirty men working with the machine. She had a certain pot of rancid fat in the kitchen, and therewith she baked them a number of stiff, hard pancakes. The men sniffed at them, tried to bite them, then with one accord they arose up from their seats, and nailed the two and seventy pancakes like so many Wittenberg theses to the great door of the barn, and then, having fastened ropes to the heavy machine, drew it away out of the farmyard with shouts and singing. The man in charge of the machine now made haste and went about to seek for work for the day, and well he knew he wouldn't find it so quickly; one farmer, whose wife cooked over frugally, said he wouldn't

try and force things; another thought he was doing a clever thing to leave the corn in sheaf awhile longer.

But it was the wives who made most ado. "I tell you," said they to their husbands, "I can't provide for thirty men all in a twinkle of the eye. In two hours it will be dinner-time."

So the machine-master in his quandary came running over to Jörn Uhl. And Jörn Uhl hastened to the kitchen.

"What's your idea about it, Lena Tarn?"

"Will it suit *you,* Jörn?"

"To a T, my girl. I'll just set the whole five teams to work and cart the beans in straight away."

She gave a quick look around, cast one glance through the kitchen, and another in the direction of the cellar, and then she had made up her mind. "Let them come," she said. "They'll have to have their meal an hour later."

Half an hour afterward the machine was busy in the yard puffing and whirring, and sheaves were flying, and the heavy black corn went rustling into the sacks.

Lena was not of the worrying and brooding sort. She lived like a child, with her heart in the present. That is why she had pleased him so greatly, being so different from him in this. She lived as free from care as a bird. Think of the birds of the heavens; they sow not, and yet they have always enough. She had no desires of her own and no expenses. In this way she thought we *must* get on. She thought she could constrain prosperity by dint of honest work.

Once, it was in autumn, it struck her, however, that Jörn had something weighing on his mind. He was coming back across the big yard after having been in the village. Through the door she saw him standing still, lost in thought. She went out to him and said, "Are you so worried, then, Jörn? Come and sit down a little by my side, then, on this seat."

"I don't like sitting here, lass. It looks too grand. As if we meant people to look and say, 'Oh, there's the farmer and his wife.'"

"You *are* the farmer and I'm the wife. Strange, isn't it? Up to the time I was thirteen I still used to walk through sand and heath, a barefooted girl. And the back wall of my father's house was made of turf." She leaned her arm on the rough wooden table and rested her cheek on her hand, gazing

thoughtfully at him. "But that was just the mistake. You ought to have had a rich wife, then you'd have had no worries, you poor old Jörn!"

He said nothing.

She went on in a low voice, "I like work, and I *can* work, and I can laugh, too. And if it were only a question of our daily bread, and clothes to put on, I'd manage to feed and clothe you and a few children. But more's wanted in this case. The work of my hands must turn to silver, and my singing to gold."

"Don't you worry," he said, comfortingly. "I'll get the interest together yet, you'll see. But I'm afraid I'll have to sell both the two-year-olds, and I'd like to have kept them another year."

She felt inclined to laugh again. "I hope you won't be getting hold of one of your own children by and by, and selling it by mistake!"

"What will it cost?"

"Oh, you poor old Jörn! what will it cost, eh? Not much. I'll lie up awhile in Wieten's room, then Wieten'll have two patients to look after for four or five days. Then I'll get up again and go about my work."

He was used to brooding over his troubles by himself from early childhood. So he had grown into a man who was like nothing so much as a house with a high wall all around it. His young wife laughed and sang, worked and loved, and came with it all no further than to the outer door of his soul. At times she knocked for admission, but he did not let her in. She seemed to him to be too kind, too affectionate, and too blithe-hearted. Why should she look into that dark, anxious soul of his?

If she had only reached a riper age, and had had happier days on the Uhl to look back on, she would have become one of those winsome country wives such as are met with here and there on farms, who, with their good humour, their quick wits and quick hands, their energy and their well-to-do ways, are the very life and soul of the whole farm. But she was still too young, at the time we are now speaking of, to put forth her full talents, and was still too much under the weight of her poverty-stricken youth to act with frank self-confidence. But as though she knew that she had not much

time left her, she threw on all who dwelt around her a flood of love and gladness.

Of a night when she was alone with Jörn, she was his delight. Then as she lay in his arms she would always ask the same question: "Things went fine to-day, didn't they?"

"Yes."

"All the washing's dry. What about you?"

"Eh? Me . . . dry?"

"Oh! I mean what about *your* work?"

"Well, the bean paddock's ploughed."

"And what a nuisance! do you know what puts me out of temper?"

"Yes, I can guess."

"That I daren't sing before the servants, you stupid old Jörn. Before, when I was a young girl, I used to sing the whole day long; it didn't matter a straw to anybody what I sang, nor to you either, although you always went by me with your nose so high in the air. But now I have to mind my P's and Q's. Nor can I now blurt out the first thought that comes into my head. That's almost a worse trial."

"Why, you've been humming tunes the whole day."

"But not singing. . . . What! . . . Can I now?"

"Fire away, then! But not too loud!"

So she sang all sorts of melodies, old and new, mostly old folk-songs, keeping her voice low and soft. And every now and then she would hide her head between his arm and his shoulder, and laugh and exclaim, "I wonder what the servants would say!" Then she would rest her head on her hand and lean over him, bringing out all sorts of droll ideas, and letting them play before him as a mother does with a chain of flowers above her child in its cradle.

On the morrow she was up betimes and had provided for the people about the farm, and had given a new-born calf its first milk. She had an especial love and aptitude in helping the helpless, new-born creatures. Then in restless haste, and with quick, dexterous hands, she had put water on to boil. Then she came in to Wieten, saying, "The young mottled cow has a calf, and now I have to . . ." She tried to laugh, but could not.

Wieten Klook came over to her and laid her hands upon

her. "You are an imprudent lass," she said; "come, lie down, your hour is come."

It was a wee, but strong and hearty boy. And although it says in the Bible, "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children," and although Lena Tarn, much to her own astonishment, found herself lying there limp and exhausted, she, nevertheless, began humming its first lullaby to the little child on the following morning; and although Wieten warned them and begged Jörn to insist upon her remaining in bed, she got up on the sixth day. That day she looked after her child alone, and even went into the kitchen and brought water for its bath, singing to herself the while, and was prouder and happier than ever any queen. Jörn Uhl let things take their course. He was so proud of having such a strong, healthy wife, and no namby-pamby. Jörn Uhl was too young and too stupid.

People said afterward that there had been a draught in the kitchen. It was late winter, in March, when the wind is damp and cold, and the air is as sunless as though it would never be spring again. But it is easy to bring accusations against God and Nature. The truth is they were not careful enough. It was fated that Lena Tarn, who had been so scrupulously pure, was to perish from contact with the impure. That same evening she lay in bed with flushed and burning cheeks, without interest in anything, and in the night she became delirious. She who in her good-heartedness had never injured a living creature, now in her raving went to every one in the house, even to the little stable lad and to all the neighbors, begging each of them for forgiveness if she had ever done them wrong. . . .

As if summoned together by her terror-stricken, wandering soul, her truest friends gathered around her bedside. There was Thiess Thiessen standing suddenly at her chamber door. The damp March wind had bitten his withered face and made it look still sharper. He said that Lisbeth had persuaded him to leave Hamburg with her, so as to have the first sunny days at the Haze. He came up to the bed but stepped back at once, trembling all over, such a fright did he get, and then went out into the big hall and paced restlessly up and down, rubbing his hands together and shaking his

head. Next morning a bright young form appeared. She came up to Jörn Uhl, who was standing helpless by the bedside, gave him her hand and looked at him with compassionate glance.

"Lena, dearie," he said, "here's Lisbeth Junker, the little girl I used to play with when I was a lad. Do you remember me telling you about it?"

But Lena Tarn remained impassive. When Wieten held her child for her to see, she looked at it with a long, silent glance. Mother and child never saw each other again.

Toward evening the fever increased. She tossed about over the whole bed. They went backwards and forwards in the room, went to the kitchen and then came back. Lisbeth Junker stood by the window, her eyes heavy with tears, and gazed out into the darkness. Thiess Thiessen stood in the kitchen by the hearth, stirring the glowing turf with the tongs. The doctor came for the third time and soon drove away again. When the driver, who knew him, looked at him, he saw but hopeless, sorrowful eyes. The minister also came and spoke to Jörn Uhl; he might just as well have spoken to one of the oak tables that stood in the hall. It was a long, anxious night, a night of helplessness, a night of woe.

Toward morning she grew more restful again, but was weary to death and could hardly speak. He was "to tell father that she had loved him dearly."

Jörn Uhl sobbed. "He's never said a single kindly word to you, my poor lass."

She tried to smile.

"You've never had anything but work and worry," he said.

Then, speaking with difficulty, she made him understand how happy she had been. He bent down close to her. She tried to stroke his hand. She no longer thought of any one but him; her child, too, she had forgotten.

That afternoon, when the fever was returning, he told her that the two new cows had been brought. And she begged that she might see them. Perhaps she wanted to show him that she still had interest for the things that concerned him and so comfort him, and in her fever got hold of the wrong thing and hit upon his wish.

So the cowherd and the dairymaid brought in the two

heavy-uddered cows, and led them with firm hand through the room; she looked up and laughed.

Late in the afternoon the fever again raged through her body, and she fought with it till nightfall; and then her strength was at an end. The doctor came in the night. His buggy lanterns glimmered in the icy wind. He looked at the sick woman, and called Jörn Uhl aside and said that there was no longer any hope. If he had anything he wanted to say to her . . .

Jörn Uhl went back to the bedside, where he had been standing for the last sixteen hours. Yes, there was something to be said to her. He stooped down close to her and told her in his clumsy way how deeply he had loved her.

She tried to look up at him. It was meant to be a long, long look, full of wonder. It was the first glimpse she had into his soul. But her eyelids were now too heavy.

After midnight she roused up a little. From the few words that she said it was clear that she was back in her childhood on the heath at Todum. She said something about, "You have bare feet," and "Those are snakes . . ." and "Here are some beautiful blue ones. . . ." At first her school comrades from the little school at Todum were with her. They went with her from bush to bush. The heath stretched out and had no end, and the others lost heart and wanted to turn back. "Yes," she said; "but must I go on alone?" So she gave them all her hand. And as she was going from one to the other, all of a sudden they weren't school-children any longer, but there stood the old teacher Karstensen, and his beautiful dark eyes sparkled just as they did many a time in the religion lesson, when he pushed Luther's catechism aside and spoke free from his heart about the courage and true-heartedness of the Redeemer. He stroked her forehead, which was hot from the summer sun, and said, "And now go straight on and you will not miss the Uhl."

And Jörn Uhl was standing there and giving her his hand to bid her adieu, and kissed her and wept, and she did not understand how the big, strong man came to be weeping so like a child. She heard it clearly. And Wieten Klook was there, too, and many others were around the bed weeping. Quite clearly she heard their bitter sobbing. Then she turned her face away and departed from among mortals, pursuing

her way out over the great heath alone, on and on. And it was very lonely; and it grew dark and her soul was full of fear. But the farther she went the lighter it grew, as though some heavy, dark cloud that had covered the sun had now moved away. And gradually, with the waxing light, she found herself in the midst of a strange company that came about her. They came from both sides, very quietly so as not to frighten her, — single figures, — and some came from behind, approaching her with silent steps. They were forms like those of mortals, but they had much purer eyes and walked as though they had never known care, and their garments were as of white silk. At last they came so close to her and there were so many of them that she was quite surrounded, and they looked on her with kindly faces. And she tried to laugh; but they said she dare not do so yet. The road began to go up-hill, and toward her there came as it were a stream of light or song — gentleness and strength came to meet her. Many hands caught hold of her and led her onwards, and she came and stood before a form of One most grave and holy, that bowed down and looked on her with kindly eyes. Then she stretched out her hand and found suddenly that she had in it a great bunch of brilliant crimson flowers, and she gave them to Him, and said, "That is all I have. I beg you to let me stay with you. I am so very tired, dear Lord! By and by I will work as much as ever I can. And, if you please, I should like to sing as I work."

When it was known in the village that Lena Tarn had died in childbed, there arose among the women-folk a great running hither and thither from house to house beneath the lindens, and in every house was mourning. There wasn't a dwelling in Mariendonn village but had the window on the right of the front door hung with a white sheet. Even old Jochen Rinkmann, cabinet-maker and funeral-furnisher, who was wont at most times to do exactly the contrary of what every one else did; who was so perverse that when a house was on fire he would insist on having a corner to himself to put out, and would growl at any one else who happened to pump water on to it, — even he, I say, now took his blue apron, having nothing else handy, and hung it over his little workshop window that

was nearest the front door, and worked the whole day in the dim light. And he hadn't even got the order for the coffin.

When Jörn Uhl came back home — it was the fourth day after the funeral — he saw the farm-servants and the maids standing together talking; he sent them to their work. He stood still in the big hall and listened. Many a time he had stood there trying to hear which room the humming came from, or to tell whether that light, brave step was in the kitchen or in the sitting-room. As he listened now, he suddenly heard the loud crying of the little child. He went into the room; there sat his father by the big Dutch stove. His pipe had gone out, and he was waving it at Wieten and scolding her for not looking after him; and by the bed stood Wieten leaning over the child. And the room was untidy and unclean.

CHAPTER XX.

THERE are some farms in this country-side that are dead. Avarice or debt, or public disgrace, or evil conscience, or slow, incurable disease, have killed all the life that was in such houses, and shut out all that would come in afresh from without. The earth rolls around, civilization goes its way, manners and customs change, the nations wage war, the prosperity of the people waxes and wanes, but the farmstead out there in the lonely fields, under the high, dark trees behind the thickets, does not stir. It stands there still as a nail rusting in a damp wall. The maid in the inner chamber and the lad in the stable forget now and again and burst out laughing, only to strike themselves on their mouths again and be still.

Some day, finally, a coffin is carried away from the farm, or a closed carriage drives up, and voluntarily or by compulsion a benighted man gets in and disappears into some madhouse for the rest of his life; or a couple of old people, man and wife or brother and sister, with sharp, distrustful eyes, leave the unclean and stuffy rooms and the tumbledown farmstead for some dwelling reserved for their old age, fearful of the night because they cannot sleep for care and worry, and fearful of the day lest their children should come — children whom they look upon as thieves anxious to steal away their hidden scrip and debentures. But the farm comes into other hands. Window-sashes and doors are taken down. House-painters and carpenters are singing in all the rooms. Soon the laughter of some young wife is heard there. And soon there are flaxen-haired children playing in the sunlight in the courtyard.

It was a gloomy November. A cold west wind had been driving through the poplars for days, and there was a sound in them as of the rush and roar of billows. On one such evening, Jörn's two brothers came back from Hamburg.

They made out that they had merely come to have "a look

around" and to see how their father was. But their father turned his head to the wall away from them. When they had left the room he abused them, saying that all the Uhls nowadays were good-for-nothings; he himself was the last of the Uhls who had been worth their salt. The two visitors troubled their heads no further about him, but strode grandly through the house and stables, praising this and finding fault with that, and prating about a great hay and corn store they had, and a big cart down there in Hamburg. That evening they went to the village public-house, after getting Jörn to give them twenty shillings, as they had "brought no change with them." They came home in the small hours of the morning. Jörn Uhl did not go to sleep that night; he lay on his back staring up into the darkness with open eyes, and pondering over things. He knew that his brothers were at the end of their tether and wanted money from him. He had noticed that their coats were patched, and frayed in front. The blood came up into his cheeks when he thought of sons of his father sitting like that in the village tavern. Next morning they said to him, — quite casually, as it were, — "I say, Jörn, we're going to borrow a small sum from Fritz Rapp. He offered it to us. In Hamburg capital is everything, you know; whether it's one's own or borrowed doesn't matter a pin. So we're going to take it. In case of either of us dying we want you to put your name to the thing."

"Well . . ." said Jörn Uhl, "that's all very well. . . . I'm deep enough in the mud already, and am no good as a bondsman for you." "Oh, it's only a matter of form," said Hinnerk. That was the tone they adopted, and their youngest brother knew not what reply to make them.

So that afternoon the matter was settled, and that same evening Hans left the Uhl to pay a forged bill with the money he had received, and save himself from prosecution. Hinnerk, however, stayed. He complained of rheumatism in his weak leg, and said that he thought the damp, soft, marsh air would do him good. He lolled about the public-houses of the villages around, and bought himself a new suit in his brother's name.

One evening, toward Christmas, he came into Jörn's room; he found his brother sitting there in the twilight, and told him he wanted ten shillings. Jörn answered quietly that he should get nothing from him. Hinnerk's eyes began to glitter;

he said a man couldn't live without money; he had borrowed a matter of twenty pounds already in his brother's name from Fritz Rapp. Jörn kept control of himself, although his voice shook; no, he would never give him another farthing; he only spent it in dragging the disgrace of his family from tap-room to tap-room. On hearing this, the brutalized fellow cried out with rage and lifted his hand against his brother. Jörn's blood now boiled over, and he caught hold of the drunkard and roughly bundled him out-of-doors.

From that time forth the limping man kept quiet when he was at home. He got the farm-servants or passing children to bring him brandy from the inn, and would sit in his room with the stableman from the next farm, a loose fellow like himself. Then he would throw himself on his bed and sleep off his drunken bout. He seldom appeared at meals. He seemed to be able to satiate himself on brandy.

Jörn bore all this in silence with dark, scowling countenance. Old Dreyer had said, "Don't let him out of your sight, Jörn! Fritz Rapp has got some evil hatching against you for not having paid Hinnerk's debts. They have been saying they'd keep him drunk on brandy for a fortnight."

So when the drunkard wanted to go out, Jörn barred the way and said, curtly and harshly, "You stay where you are!"

One day in spring, however, he left the farm. For a year he led a vagabond's life in the country around, working only sufficiently to keep him in drink, abusing his father and brother. Now and again he passed by the old homestead with his boon companions, shouting and bragging.

One day in spring old Farmer Uhl got up from his arm-chair and managed, with the aid of a stick, to walk a little. Soon he was able to stand and lean against the wall, looking across the road. And after awhile you could see the heavily built old man walking barehead, with disordered gray hair, slouching around the house, and looking out for any one that might come along that lonely way to whom he might utter his complaints and abuse, and tell them how Klaus Uhl and his children were mismanaging the farm and bringing themselves to beggary. He was quite convinced that he was the Hinrich Uhl who had founded their house and brought the family to dignity and importance. Once it happened that his limping son came by that way when the old man was standing there,

and there was such an interchange of foul language between them that Jörn Uhl could not conceal the shame of his soul from one of his men who was taking out food to the cattle; he shook his head in desperation, then in his blind rage he struck the fork so violently into the wall that the handle flew into splinters. Such outbursts of rage came over him more frequently this year. His character began to show flaws and to get a tendency to gloominess and austerity.

The old maid servant, whose hair is getting thin and gray, looks after things as faithfully as ever, although without her old zeal and hope. She sits and sews and patches for three now, for there is the old man and Jörn and the little child to care for. When the old witling comes in from outside he will sit down heavily in the big armchair, and growl, "Tell me a story!" Then she tells him strange old tales, such as the soul of this people has invented in its dreams. Some of them are very silly, others very wonderful, others very eerie. Of an evening she takes her spectacles and opens the Bible, and will always choose some part or other of the Old Testament to read aloud, — strange miracles, great wild deeds, and the stern words of upbraiding of the old prophets. She has never been able to rightly make up her mind about the New Testament. By nature she had a sunny enough disposition; she had been a soft and loving child in those old days when she used to play gipsies with Anna Stuhr and her children on the heath. But the heart-breaking experiences of the years that followed, and her long, lonely time of service on the big marsh farms, and the way in which Fate had bound her life up with the tragedy at the Uhl, all these things had combined to lead her out of life's sunshine deeper and deeper into the shadow. In the darkness and not in the light she now sought for the Abiding and Eternal. The brightness and greenery of forest glades no longer seemed to her to be the symbol of the world; she sought it rather in the gray gloom of air beneath the ancient pines.

The master of the house, too, was a gloomy, brooding man, a man whose lips, despite his youth, lie in a sharp, bitter line, as if they had grown together by dint of long pressing. He never goes into the village, and neither knows nor cares what happens there. Church never sees him. His thoughts are

bounded by his own farmstead and do not trespass beyond the fields of the Uhl, except, maybe, to visit the little churchyard where Lena Tarn lies buried, and the parish registry where the taxes are paid, and the grand new house of the Whiteheads which is not far from the Schenefeld Church.

If any one were to come to him and tell him his country was in danger and that he must help to defend it, he would say: "Country? What country? Don't you know, man, that I have my hands and my head overfull already? The farm is overmortgaged, my father's a dotard, my brother a vagabond, and Lena Tarn is in her grave. Don't come talking to me about my country."

In order to save paying extra wages, he himself patches up doors and mangers and lattices. He goes around the house with a bucket of lime, putting a stone to rights here and there, and all the while ashamed of himself before the servants. But the farmhouse must be kept in good repair, or else old Whitehead may come some fine day and say: "The place is going to ruin. Clear out from the farm altogether!" Yes! From this farm that has been a source of care to him as long as he could remember. And what was to be done with those two inside who are telling the story of the man who found an iron pot while he was ploughing, an iron pot full to the brim with silver crowns?

Jörn's child runs about alone, left to itself to play about the stables. It has none but taciturn people around it, and in answer to all its inquisitiveness, learns nothing but sad, sober, prosy things. So it becomes old-fashioned, and at four years of age speaks in the drawling country dialect about the price of beasts and cattle, and tries to play six and sixty with the ploughmen in the stable corner.

Lisbeth Junker used to come once a year from Hamburg to spend a few days in the old village schoolhouse. On these visits she always came over to the Uhl, too, to have a look at little Jürgen. Her hair and her eyes had still their fresh, Sunday, virgin look as of old, and her figure was still full of its old, lithe, proud strength and grace. In her gray eyes and around her firm rosy mouth deep earnestness of character was manifest. She took little Jürgen on her knees, and told him with those demure eyes and that high, soft, shy voice of hers about her life away there in the big city. She

told him how she still lived there with her aunt, and how much she liked it. "Our little shop lies near the grammar school," she said, "and not far from a big board school. The school-children buy all sorts of stationery from us, and ink and exercise-books, and we sometimes have big orders from the professors and sixth-class boys."

Jörn looked reverently at her fine, proud beauty, and thought, "How far away she is from me. She is a princess, and I am a poor, rough ploughman. What business should she have here in the midst of all my wretched life?" Then he said out loud to Lisbeth, "You're too young for it, Lisbeth."

She shook her head. "What else have I to do, Jörn? What other aim in life have I? It's better than being a mere dependent in some strange household."

Then they began talking of other things. She tried to lead him to speak of old times; but those times lay far from him as though hidden behind some vast, gloomy wood. He was too close beset with heavy thoughts to understand the shy pressure of her hand and the pain in her eyes when she was bidding him good-by. Then she would come again on the second day, perhaps, "to have a peep in." But the conversation persisted in flagging. She spoke of this and that, and asked him all sorts of questions, but with her quick intuition she soon saw that his thoughts were elsewhere. Then she went away. On the way home her cheeks suddenly flushed red with shame. And that night, when she was back in Hamburg, she cried and cried until she had no more tears.

Once, it was when the child was about three or four, and had been playing on the roadside, it came into the big hall with its hand in that of a youngish, fair-bearded man, and called out, "Father, here's the minister."

The other minister, the one who used to go through the village with such a proud knowledge of his dignity, and preach so loud and with such assurance about the only orthodox faith, had been promoted to some city parish. The one that now came was a man still young in years, of childlike nature, and one that frankly said what he thought about things. Everything he said was true, but sometimes it wasn't pleasant. He wasn't the sort of man for the Uhls; these hard, crafty, cautious men, behind whose words one always has such a laborious search before one discovers the truth. With the

flight of years he gained more and more enemies. At last the whole parish was loud in its cries for a new minister in his stead; they wanted one who was more positive, more officious, more unctuous, and, moreover, a good card-player.

These Protestant churches, three hundred and fifty years after Luther's death, are still unable to tolerate a pastor who pretends to be nothing more than a simple, honest man. In these country parishes there is many a sorrowful and heavy heart, whose sorrow and heaviness, moreover, is all in vain.

At this time, however, he was still fresh and full of hope; he had only been six months in the parish, and trusted to be able to carry out his task; by honest love and honest work he wanted to win all these people over to him, and thus win them for the Gospel and its high and beautiful message.

So the minister came in and made a few remarks about wind and weather, and then went on to say: "Next Sunday we are going to put up a memorial tablet in the church for those who fell in the war. So I have come over to ask you to come, too. I know that you're no great churchgoer, but you ought to be present at this festival."

Jörn Uhl said in a not unfriendly tone, with his eyes on the ground: "I am in no frame of mind to join in with you. You will know, I dare say, how things stand with my father, and what I have had to go through here. I haven't a jot of inclination left for public ceremonies and such things."

"That I can well understand," said the minister, with a look of sympathy. "But it's not a dance I am inviting you to. That I wouldn't have dreamed of. It is a service in memory of the dead."

Jörn Uhl looked up with a kindly glance. "No! I cannot come," he said; "it's out of my power. But I'll think on it when you are together yonder in the church. They are all brave lads, the whole four of those whose names are going to be put on the tablet. I stood at Geert Dose's side when he was dying. I will come another time by myself and look at the stone."

The minister looked at him and liked him. "Well, I must be content, I suppose," he said. Then they shook hands and bade each other good-by.

On Sunday evening Jörn took his little boy by the hand and went across fields with him to the church way, and

reached the churchyard unseen and entered the church. Hanging on the wall in an oak frame he saw the marble tablet gleaming in the dim light. It had a wreath of oak leaves around it. There was still light enough for him to make out the names on it. Beneath the names was written:

"THEY DIED FOR THEIR COUNTRY."

Jörn nodded. The simple tablet and short epitaph pleased him.

He heard some one else enter the church, and looking around saw it was the minister. "Do you like it?" he asked Jörn.

"It's a good epitaph," said Jörn.

"Many members of the congregation wanted something grander and more rhetorical. . . . If you look at the matter closely," he went on, gravely, "every earnest man does the same as these four men have done. These did it in three days, or in three weeks, with their sorrow heaped upon them. And your young wife, Uhl, did it, too, in a few days; she gave her life for you and the child. Others take years to do it in, some for their children's sake, some for the sake of an idea, or whatever other noble motives drive men to suffer voluntarily for others. Yesterday we buried the wife of a working man. She seldom came to church; but her whole life was a faithful, earnest struggle for her husband and her children. Serving and self-sacrifice, or helping others, or loyalty to one's fellow men, call it what you like, that is the real, human kingship. That is true Christianity."

"I can well understand that," said Jörn Uhl. "That's a thing that looks one squarely and honestly in the face." He nodded and looked at the minister, as though he expected him to say something more about the matter.

"The Saviour," the minister went on, "has by His pure and lovely life and by His most pathetic death, as well as by His gracious, strong, proud words, cast into humanity a great stream of thoughts and new life, words like a living flame as He said. And now one man takes this and the other that, one church this and another that, and each squats in a corner with the little rushlight that each of them has taken, and looks at it and lets it flare or smoke, according as they prefer smoke or flame, and says, 'That's the truth of our blessed

Lord.' Many add their own bit of truth or even untruth, many, indeed, even their own wickedness and malice to it. And in this way the real image of the Saviour becomes so petrified, so disguised and distorted, that the real nobility of His face is no longer seen. And yet all the time it's not such a difficult thing, even for an unlearned man, to form, with the sole aid of the first Gospels, a picture of Christ, wherein the great, leading features of His life and will and character stand clearly forth. As far as I can see, what He has to tell us is this: We shall have faith that God in heaven is always ready, even in our darkest hour of need, to help us with His strong, guardian arm; with this joyous trust in our hearts we shall manfully fight against all evil both in ourselves and around us. With this faith in God, like a strong wall behind our backs, we shall fight for what's right and good and never doubt of the victory, first here, then hereafter. That, according to my idea, is what Christianity means. But if a man cannot come to have this trust in God — for it is not every one that can — and yet nevertheless can live a life of goodness and love, then let us accept him for what he is and be content and rejoice over him."

"Every good man must agree with what you say," said Jörn. "There's no need for us to stand brooding on one leg, a thing we've no time for. Nor is it necessary for us to strip the reasoning powers God has given us of all independence and then to accept whatever folk choose to set up before us, as though they should say, 'Feed, bird, or perish!'"

The minister gave a hearty laugh. "There's nothing more certain," he said, "than that the things Jesus wanted to bring to humanity were exceedingly simple, direct, and clear. But really I don't know what they were unless they were what I just now said."

They walked together as far as the edge of the churchyard. The minister began to ask about Jörn's campaign in France. Jörn had thawed a little, and now spoke with slow deliberation of their evil plight at Gravelotte, and the wet camp before Metz, and the long, bitter weeks around Orleans. Then he said he had no more time to spare. "We have a mare in the stable we expect to foal soon, and the stable-boy who has been left with her isn't thoroughly reliable," said Jörn. So they parted, each with a good opinion of the other. The

minister went into the village to speak with his parishioners there, and try and soften their hearts, but making no more impression on them than a dog does with its barking at a passing wagon. But Jörn Uhl went back to his farm, there to live through the darkest hour of all his life.

For whilst he was on his way to the church, his brother had come that way. He had been drinking and brawling all day in a public-house, and had learnt from the lad at the stable door that the young farmer was away from home. Cursing and swearing, he forced his way into the house, and stumbled into the room where his old father was, and poured out his hate and misery before him.

The old man was already in bed, but raised himself on his elbow, and stared with dazed eyes at the intruder. "What do you want?" he asked, in a quavering voice. "I have toiled hard, and worked in the sweat of my brow, and have stayed at home all my life, and whenever I had to go to town I went on foot. I, old man as I am, I curse you and your father. The house and home and wealth I got together with so much toil has dazed your wits. Away with you! The whole brood of you! You're not fit for the sun to shine on."

"You're mad," said the drunkard, supporting himself on a chair by the bedside. "I tell you, you're as mad and crazy as a sow that eats her own young. But it's a form of madness that suits your purpose. You were always a good one at finding out things that suit your purpose. First you manage the farm like a rascal, and after you've squandered everything you set up in your craziness for being a man of birth." He took the bottle that he had in his tattered jacket and drank and drank. "The whole world's off its hinges, I tell you. When people don't like being what they are, they just take on some crazy guise that suits them. I'm going to be a different man from what I am, too. Off, off with this old skin! It's too shabby." He pulled off his coat and flung it on the bed. "Good-by, grand-dad, good-by, great-grandfather, old Adam, you! I'm going to strip this old skin off, I say. What's the good of living!" He stumbled out into the big hall. It was all dark.

When Jörn Uhl came home he found his father asleep. Wieten was not in the room. Then he went into the hall. There lay Hinnerk Uhl on the floor near the ladder, and

Wieten Klook and the old ploughman were standing by him. Wieten told him how his brother had come home. "I went after him and couldn't find him, at first. Afterward I found him here, hanging from the ladder."

The man went off toward the stable, and said to the lad who was standing in the doorway with pale, frightened face, "Get away back to the mare. This is no place for you."

When the two had disappeared, Jörn Uhl recovered from his stupor. He leaned heavily against the ladder and lifted his hand to his face. And Wieten said, "Don't take on so, Jörn, laddie, don't take on so."

The coroner came and the magistrate, and Jörn Uhl was as cold as ice and as dangerous as broken glass. The magistrate asked who was to make the coffin. Jörn answered, "What's that to do with me?"

"Yes, but we can't have him buried as a pauper at the expense of the parish."

Jörn gave him a haughty look. "Why can't you? Isn't it the parish that licenses the tap-rooms where men may drink themselves into sots? Am I responsible, then, or is the parish? . . . Well, let the parish bury the sot of its own making."

That same evening the pauper's coffin arrived, and was put into a shed on the right of the cow-stall, which had formerly been used as a chaff-room.

Jörn Uhl and Finke, the carpenter, put the dead man in. "Paupers' coffins are made beforehand," the carpenter said. "He's too long. . . . He was in the Life Guards."

"It will have to do."

Wieten came in, leading the old man by the hand like a child. In the other hand she had the empty bottle and the cord. "We'll put them in with him," she said; "it's no use trying to deceive God. Now He can see his temptation and the misery he lived and died in." And so saying, she laid the things beneath his knees.

Jörn Uhl went away, shaking his head, and left the two alone. He walked up and down in front of the house like a sentinel on guard, as if to ward off further shame and misfortune from his home. When he went inside again to see his father to bed as usual, he found the old man already undressed. Wieten was sitting by the bedside reading out of

the Old Testament the story of Eli, the man who neglected to train his children aright.

"Jörn," she said, "I believe he knows to-night that he's Klaus Uhl. He asked me just now whether he was the man who fell on the ploughshare."

Jörn Uhl came to the bedside and looked at his father, and said, "Are you comfortable, father?" The old man made no reply. "Give over reading, Wieten. It's no use. It's too late for that now."

"Well, as you think best," said she, and put the book back in its place. "I was thinking it might bring him to himself."

"Well, and what then?" said Jorn.

The sun shone. The wind blew. The little lad ran about the farmyard in sun and wind, holding his hands high above his head, making believe that he was going to fly. But Uhl Farm was dead.

CHAPTER XXI.

UHL FARM was dead. The people who live on a dead farm mostly grow miserly and dirty. But that was not the case at the Uhl. Wieten's hair kept smooth and neat. The little lad was tidily dressed, like the child of some workman who has a good wife. Jörn himself now wore a blue cotton suit in summer and moleskins in winter, and his waistcoat buttoned up to the throat. Right at the bottom of the old chest lay unused the dark blue suit he had had made for his marriage with Lena Tarn. Nor did the hearts of the folk at the Uhl grow callous or hard. They were guarded against any such danger by the memory of Lena Tarn and her goodness, and by Wieten Klook's quiet gravity; and the young farmer's inborn feeling for what is honorable and pure now stood him in good stead. But there was another danger. It seemed as if he was going to become a recluse and eccentric. Once before, when his first love had terminated so unhappily, this danger had confronted him. Now it was here again. In his sad and anxious solitude the inclination to brood and ponder and think out the cause of things came upon him. And this was so much the worse, since it now found him a man whose soul was weary and bitter almost to despair. But whereas he had had to fight his way out alone before, both men and stars now lent him their aid.

It was a good thing that he now had some inner light to guide him. It was a good thing that he did not need to stagger about at random and go reeling into the abysses of the abstract and transcendental, like a man who takes a run and springs down from the world into space. . . . Up in heaven the golden hosts still trooped by, with glimmering lance and shining breastplates. On these he could direct his telescope and find there stuff for quiet and earnest thought.

Behind the house in the orchard, on the edge of the old

moat, there stood an old garden-house, whose walls were still sound, although the roof was in decay. He set this little building in order, repairing it and giving it a revolving roof, and in the little observatory he fixed two firm stone pillars, and laid the refractor on the one and the transit-instrument on the other. On the window-sill he arranged a shelf for books and a clock, and nailed various astronomical tables and charts on the walls. All this he did for himself without help.

His father had often used this arbour as a place for drinking and card-playing, and his brothers, too, had often sat there of a night in company with the wenches with whom they consorted; and now Jörn, the youngest, quenched his thirst for knowledge there. Half the night he would sit there with his charts and glasses, peering deep into a most learned book, and looking exceedingly wise, with his forehead all puckered and wrinkled. And at times, astounded by the discoveries he was making, he would strike his knee with the flat of his hand so that the room rang again. And good it was that this was so. It was a leap out of a field full of thorns and thistles on to a high wall, where cool winds fan the dusty laborer. And men helped him, too.

The municipality, as it happened, was just thinking of a new plan for draining the district, a matter which requires a good deal of exact preliminary work, and costs not only time but much labor and money. Three years long the council had been reflecting how they could set about it in the most prudent and most thrifty way, and whether they could not manage without the aid of learned professionals, who send in, as is known, such barbarously long bills. So they came over one day to the silent, learned young farmer, and found him sitting there on his farm like a spider in its web, and asked him for his advice. Jörn thought the matter over for a week, making diagrams in the big land register half the night through, often laying his long forefinger reflectively along his long nose, as though it was *its* length he was measuring.

At the end of the week he went to the council and told them that *he,* Jörn Uhl, would undertake the whole work, under their supervision. They should pay him, he said, for the work he did at such and such a rate, payments to be made each New Year, if the year's work turned out to their satisfaction. They were greatly astonished, and requested him to

leave the room for awhile. There was a long discussion, and at last his offer was accepted by a narrow majority.

He carried out the whole work in five years as he had agreed, and reaped a double benefit from it. It put some money into his empty pockets, and, what was more, the extra work prevented him from giving way to his fits of brooding.

His task also brought him into touch with botany and mineralogy. In his tramps about the district, through the Geest and the Marsh, and over fen and heath, he collected all sorts of plants and seeds of weeds, and rejoiced the heart of the old professor in town with his specimens; and when new deep trenches were being dug, he was seized by the desire to examine and define the different kinds of earth and strata, and the old professor got from him a number of neatly made drawings with exact reports. So, you see, men helped him.

His little son was growing apace, and would go trotting along at his father's side through house and barn with endless questions, and would ride and drive with him to the smithy. And one day the boy went alone into the village and brought another little lad back with him to play with him, just as the lonely dove gets itself a mate. From that time forth, Jörn's intercourse with the children helped his thoughts and his ways of speech to become more childlike. He who had hitherto tried in vain to hit the right tone in conversation, now sat between these two little chaps on the form near the big barn door, and listened knowingly as they conversed, and found the tone he wanted, and built them a rabbit-hutch, half above ground and half beneath, as is the proper thing with rabbit-hutches. When the lad was five years of age, he used to carry his father's chain and surveying-rods after him from field to field. And once when he was six, and heard his father at the beginning of harvest complaining to Wieten that he'd have to hire a lad to drive an extra cart, the little fellow got up and maintained he could do it. And during the whole of that hot and busy harvest for four whole weeks he drove the big wagon, and was proud as a king, and crowed with laughter and drummed with his feet for very pleasure when one of the men upset the last load of corn by the gateway where the entrance is so difficult. That had never happened to him, bless you. Jörn Uhl stood by the corner of the field and saw the youngster's delight, and came near laughing.

The child's parents had been of about equal stature, tall, broadly built, and lithe; but the boy had his mother's eyes, and it seemed as if he had inherited much of her kindly and helpful nature. When he burst out with his ringing laugh while playing with the dogs or the children, Jörn would come to the door and look at the child, and his thoughts would lose themselves far away. Men helped him, I say.

One evening — it was after that conversation in the church — Jörn Uhl ventured across the fields to the manse. It was just past supper-time. The door was opened, and they wondered who it was coming at that hour. There stood Jörn Uhl in his dark gray suit, broad shouldered and square built, in the doorway. He was asked in, and entered, stooping as he passed under the low door of the old house.

In the middle of a low room he saw a four-cornered table, and all four sides of it were occupied. On the one side sat the minister reading; on the other sat his wife, a natty, somewhat delicate little body, and childless; she also was reading. On the third sat a girl, some eighteen years or so of age, a schoolmaster's daughter, who helped with the housework, a merry-hearted rogue, and she was reading, too. On the fourth side sat the minister's father. He was an old man, and had been in the wars in his youth and had been wounded at Idstedt, and then in his after life as a country artisan he had seen and gone through all sorts of strange experiences. He was wont to say: "No need for me to read things in books; my life's a book of itself." He would sit with his chair a little turned away from the table, and smoke and tell stories that no one listened to. Only when it was anything new or interesting the others would look up from their books and ask, "What was that you were saying, dad?" Somewhere or other, squeezed in between these four anywhere where there was most space, sat a merry little lad of some ten years of age. He had no parents and had been put out "to browse at the manse," and "get in condition," as the minister said. He, too, was reading.

Jörn Uhl came stooping into the room through the low doorway, and there was no chair for him. At last the girl stood up and gave the boy a sign, and they both went and sat on the sofa at the other end of the room, and put a draught-board between them and began playing eagerly, only

interrupting themselves to dip into a bag of raisins that had somehow or other got left on the sofa.

So Jörn Uhl got a seat and talk began. At first the minister thought the visitor had come with some special object, so he merely made a few general remarks about the weather and waited for Jörn to broach the special subject of his errand.

After awhile, as Jörn made no move, the minister saw that his guest had really come just for the sake of a pleasant hour together, a thing he'd been many a time invited to do, but without avail. So they began to talk about what was happening abroad in the wide world, and from that they got to talking about the stars. It was the minister's wife that started the theme, and it went so far that night that Jörn Uhl got a big sheet of paper in front of him, and with a lead-pencil, which he gripped like a hay-fork, he sketched a map of the heavens, and while talking in quiet, deliberate, pure High German, he took the whole of the pastor's family with him for a long walk along the Milky Way; striding slowly forward and following his nose, he traversed the sky from one side to the other with them.

Everybody in the manse gave a sigh of relief when the door shut behind him that night. The minister said: "Did not I tell you what a clever, sensible fellow he was?" His wife answered: "You were right for once; it went fine."

He visited them again at the end of a fortnight, and repeated his visits from that time forth about once every fourteen or fifteen days. Whenever the conversation hung fire — for neither Jörn Uhl nor the minister nor the minister's wife were what are called "society talkers" — the minister would take down a book and read out aloud. It even happened sometimes that he was so intent upon the book he was reading that he said straight out that he couldn't give it up that night. Then Jörn would talk to the old man about war and the life of soldiers, and with the housewife about the strange fates of different people they had known.

When it came to choosing the books to be read aloud, the minister at first got quite on the wrong track. He hit on "Faust" and then on "Reineke Fuchs." Jörn Uhl listened, to be sure, but when they had finished reading these books, and he was asked his opinion about them, he shook his head emphatically, and said, "No, minister, that's not in my line;

Wieten Klook stuffed me too full of such things when I was a child. She used to tell us just such flighty and unreliable stories as these — me and Fiete Cray, who has since been dairy-farming in Wisconsin, and is now starting a wood-yard in Chicago. I got a letter from him last month — well, he and my sister always used to listen attentively enough; but for me these tales had no meaning. I'd be building platforms with the knitting-needles the while, and laying down sleepers, and building railway lines with Wieten's wools, and when I grew a bit older I'd be reading in Littrow's 'Wonders of the Heavens.' That's my particular bent, so to say. But I've always had other things to do."

So the minister tried books of travel and biography. And thereafter all went swimmingly. They read the travels of an Arctic explorer and then those of a wanderer in the desert, and the life of a statesman as told by himself, and then the life of Jesus as told by Mark. This last book they read just as they had read the others, and had many a hot argument over it.

At last, in the third year of such intercourse, things came to such a pitch that the minister one day said: "Both of us have Frisian blood in our veins, so we must needs get to understand something about philosophy; there's no getting out of it. So just let's clench our teeth and tackle it. I've got a big, thick book that a farmer lad from Langerhorn wrote, a man who's now a famous professor."

So they began reading philosophy. And many a time they looked at each other in sheer helplessness. And many a time it seemed as though the farmer understood more than the pastor. The latter has never up to the present day become a philosopher.

In this way did men and stars help Jörn Uhl to tide over the years of evil and loneliness.

CHAPTER XXII.

He had risked it, and put in thirty acres of his best land with wheat. He wanted to take a long pull at Fortune's flask. If things turned out well, he would be able to pay off the first instalment of the mortgage; up to the present he had had his hands full trying to pay off his brothers' promissory notes. The wheat came on well through the winter, and in spring shot up thick and even. Jörn's hopes waxed and throve mightily; then of a sudden they shrivelled up and were dead. For it was the fatal wheat year, when the crops failed all over the country.

Jörn Uhl was not alone in his misfortune. As I write I seem to see many a soured, harsh face peering at me and saying, "Those are our troubles you're relating over again."

In those times a third of all that country-side was wheat-land, and it was wheat that decided the fate of many a man. One year sufficed to seat a farmer firm in the saddle, or, if he was weak, to fling him to the ground. All that is changed since then. The Marsh is now no longer covered with waves of wheat; it no longer puts one in mind of the sea that throbs away there beyond the dikes. The Marsh is now all green with grass, and we Marsh-men are commencing to be cattle-breeders, and to be as stupid as cattle.

There's a story told of a farmer from across the Eider, how he used to go out every morning with his meerschaum pipe in his mouth to look at his cattle, as a good breeder ought. And coming up with them, he would go among them and say, "Good morning to you all," and would go on talking to them something in this strain: "Lads," he'd say, "it won't be long now before ye're fat and fit. As for ye, my mon, ye're a bit too lean about the hind quarters, and the hind quarters is a part folk lay great store by. No matter, though; I tell ye ye're all to be packed off together. First ye'll come to Husum, that's

ae town down yon, and there ye'll see houses cuddled together like peas in a pod. Then ye'll come to the railway, — where it's always going puff-puff. Then ye'll be off down into the lands by the Rhine. That'll make ye open your eyes, I warrant. There's Farmer Olders has been down there, and the things he can tell on is just awful. Chimney after chimney, and furnaces glowering at ye, and smelting and hammering and filing everlasting. And there . . . there you'll . . . hem! Why, yes, you'll get another master over ye . . . and I . . . I'll get my bawbees. So we'll all be content with our bargain, and there's an end on it."

He said all this aloud, with his hands deep in his pockets and speaking between his teeth in a canny, deliberate sort of voice, without taking the meerschaum pipe from his mouth for a second. A man whom he didn't see was working in one of the ditches near, and heard it all, and set the story going in the village, that is, after he had touched it up a little on his own account. And everybody was amazed that Farmer Soderbohm should talk like that to his cattle; for he was a taciturn man, and nothing was ever known to come out of his mouth but the smoke of his pipe.

That's what it's coming to around here, too. And therefore he who writes this story of Jörn Uhl's life has bought for himself a small estate, up there on the Geest, eight feet long by four feet wide. And when the time comes for him to lay himself down there to rest, as he thinks of doing some day, he will be able to lie there, he thinks, and hear the rustle of the summer fields of rye.

One evening, about the end of July, Jörn Uhl went down into the marsh and met old Dreyer there. The old man stopped, leaned heavily on his staff, and panting: "Say, Jörn," he asked, "have you noticed that there's mice in the wheat?"

"No," said Jörn; "I was out there the day before yesterday and didn't see a trace of a mouse."

"The day before yesterday there were only a few; yesterday there were a good number, but to-day there are whole hosts of them. I am in sore fear for the corn, Jörn. This plague of mice comes every fifty years. A hundred years ago, my father has told me, they ruined the wheat and grass fields for three years running. In those days you could buy a good Dittmarsh farm for a pipe of tobacco and a go-stick."

Jörn Uhl left the old man standing where he was and went over along the oat-fields, and saw nothing; went further and stood by the hedge-gate and looked into his wheat. On his right, so near that he could see its watery mirror, flowed the little river Au. And as he stood there looking away over the wide, waving fields of corn, he thought he noticed a blade of wheat near him suddenly vanish . . . then another . . . and another . . . and another. As though a hand were silently stretched up out of the earth plucking them away. He passed his hand over his eyes to make sure it was not some hallucination. Then he saw what it was; he saw a mouse raise itself on its hind legs — one bite, then a second, and the blade bowed and leaned against the next one to it. It was dainty, delicate fret-saw work. He glanced over the field and saw more than was to be seen — it was as though the whole field were alive.

"Well," he said to himself, "that decides it."

While he still stood there deep in thought, he heard a gentle sound of rippling and splashing down there in the dark water; and as he looked he saw thousands and thousands of these little creatures swimming across the stream, passing and passing. Dazed with the sight, he turned around and strode homewards.

"If only my father were dead. If only he might die to-day or to-morrow. Will it have to come to him being carried away from the farm in his armchair? Will all the world have to gaze at our poverty and peer at our rickety furniture and torn pillows?"

He went into the room to see how his father was. "He's just the same as usual, Jörn; only he refuses to get up to-day; I think he's taken it into his head that there's less danger for him if he stays in bed."

"No danger in bed! Why, Wieten, Wieten, it's a mice year. A mice year, the likes of which hasn't been seen for a century. The mice are in the wheat. They're in the farmyard, they're gnawing at the bed-posts, they're eating us alive. It's all over with us, Wieten."

"Jörn!" she said. "Ah, God! Jörn, don't talk like that."

She went out, shaking her head sadly; a little body, bent and stooping, a shuffling, timid, wizened, poor old thing. "Poor old Wieten, your life has been nothing but care and worry. But quick! Think of a way of escape! Quick! for every second ten wheat-blades fall. Every minute the farm

. . . Oh, but what good will thinking do! Thinking can do no good now. Nothing but a miracle could save the place."

Jörn has gone down to the fields again to see how the mice are ravaging his crops. He meets a neighbor coming toward him, a man who has a wheat-field, too, and is loaded with debts. In the last two days he has grown an old man.

"What do you say to it, Jörn?"

"What *can* I say, Peter? It's not the fault of our ploughing. It's a thing above our might."

His neighbor nods assent and passes on. He has five children waiting for him at home.

At the beginning of August it begins to rain, and there's a hope that some disease may break out among the mice and carry them off as quickly as they came. But the rain is warm and soft and steady. The sort of rain that makes even children give up hoping for good weather, and withdraw in groups beneath the dripping eaves to tell each other stories: "*Once* on a time when the sun shone," they say. . . . So it goes on week after week, and week after week. Is it really harvest-time? But when will the sickles gleam in the sun again?

They are but little tiny beings, those, that are burrowing and working away there beneath the wheat-fields. But what difference does it make, little or big? It is an unnatural sort of life; the mice there in the loose soil are living lecherously, and the corn that the rain has laid on the soft wet earth has learnt vice from them. Young as it is, still in its cradle, it is beginning to sprout, the rank and wanton ears conceive, and first and second fruit wallow and ferment together in vile confusion. There's no need to go to the wheat-fields any more; nothing is to be done with them.

Jörn came back home feeling a dull ache in head and heart. As he walked he thought to himself: "I'll be worrying myself ill with trying to fathom it all. . . . It is stupid to be always asking the why and wherefore of everything. But it is strange, I can't help doing it. It is just as if I had been dragged into a dark house, and had escaped awhile into the sunlight, and then got dragged back again into that wretched haunt, and had to crawl through every stuffy hole and cranny of it."

He went to his bedroom, sat down in his chair, and threw his legs up on the old box so that it creaked again. "What are those words there in the woodwork? 'The blessing of

the Lord maketh rich without labor.' That would be a nice thing! Well, as far as I'm concerned, let it! I pray you for a specimen of blessing without labor, or for the matter of that *with* labor. If that text in the Bible holds good, the whole Bible is not worth a rap, nor God Almighty, either."

He made a wild gesture with his hand over his head as though he would fain open and unbind things that lay there under some imprisoning weight. Like a man lying under a heavy, high pile of straw, while more and more is heaped on top till his head grows dazed and his breath more and more stifled. He remained sitting there in his chair, brooding and tormenting himself, and every now and again passing his hand through his hair, as though he were seeking key and latch and lock to loosen and free himself from this oppressive thing; so gradually he fell into an uneasy doze, then started, and woke again.

It now seemed to him as though his life had been all cast away in vain. For a moment he was like a groom who has left his horses for a moment and sees them rearing and ready to bolt in wild terror. Jörn Uhl sprang to the rescue and flung himself in the way of his own thoughts; he tugged at the reins, grinding his teeth, and his wild eyes looked into other eyes still wilder. But he was thrown back and sank on his knees, and they were off on their furious course. Ho! how they galloped on their wild career! Who could stop them? Ho! let them go and have their fling!

How was that, though? He had been at the town grammar school, hadn't he? How had it come about then that he now found himself in such a sorry plight? Who had got the farm, after all? Not Hinnerk, for he was dead, and he had seen him in his coffin. Who then? Why, the eldest, of course. But how was it possible that he didn't know that? "I must have been through some serious illness," he thought; "that's how it is my thoughts get away from me at times; but everything'll come into its proper place by and by." But one thing was certain, at any rate; he must have spent a good many years there on the farm. How did that come about, then? Oh, yes . . . that came about in this way . . . right! . . . His father was a drunkard, and so he had had to leave the grammar school and go through years of toil. But now all that was past, and Lena Tarn and the years of happiness had

come. He had got a place in the observatory, too, as a kind of servant to a great astronomer. He paced up and down the room, and would fain have felt glad about it, and was nevertheless in direst anxiety, so that he thought of opening the door and asking Lena Tarn whether she could manage on a small fixed salary of nine hundred shillings a year; of course she'd laugh over her whole face and say, "Like winking! why, that's nothing! Pancakes every day turned in fat." But when he opened the door he caught sight of one of the farm servants walking across the hall, and hesitated, and then shut the door once more. In doing so he struck a hard object against the door-post, and suddenly noticed that he had something under his arm. It was the telescope and the cloth he usually polished it with, and he had no idea how they came to be in his hand, as it was the old telescope that lay right at the bottom of the chest. He bit his lips and grew pale, and his forehead became damp with a terrible fear.

"Mad!" he said.

He paced up and down in greatest distress and anguish. He tried to think what he had just been thinking about, worrying himself to remember the past, and could not unravel his thoughts. "I have never had luck in anything I have undertaken," he said to himself; "everything has turned out bad. . . ."

"That's what old Nick Johns used to say, too, after he'd made a mess of his life with his own muddling; he used to tell every one that he'd had no luck . . . that's the way with me."

And suddenly his life, instead of a long story of toil and worry, flashed before him as a mass of error and sin. The bad thoughts that race along by the side of all the works of man — even his best — like ugly, swarthy hounds by the side of noble horses, now of a sudden grew into gigantic forms. "Where is your sister Elsbe, Jörn Uhl? You never looked after her, and now she is amongst the lost. Where is your brother Hinnerk? You struck him and drove him away from the farm; he became a vagrant and a drunkard on the dusty road; you wanted the farm for yourself. What about the ploughshare? Did you not wish your father to fall on it? Where is Lena Tarn? Didn't you forbid her to sing? You said she'd have to get up out of bed or else you'd strike her. You are a villain and a murderer. You are a sevenfold mur-

derer like Tim Thode. They're coming! Hark you. . . . It's you they're looking for. They want to drag you away . . . away through the whole village!"

"I must go and see," he said, with panting voice, "whether these things they say are true." He took the telescope and went down to the garden-house, and set the instrument in its place with feverish, flying hands, and did not think to take the cap off which lay over the objective, and looked through and said to himself in amazement, "Black! black as night! It's God's truth. That's the way with my soul. Not a jot, not a single jot of goodness in it. Not a spark of light and not a star in all the heavens. It's not to be borne any longer. Where is one to go to, then, if this is so? One cannot see three steps ahead. That's a hedgehog's life. Hinnerk's ladder is standing in the middle shed of the barn. I will quit this place. I will go before people have noticed what's the matter. There must be light somewhere or other, I tell you. . . ." He closed the instrument again with the same feverish haste, and was going to go out, when he suddenly noticed a shadow in front of him, and looked up. There stood Wieten Klook in the low doorway, looking at him with eyes full of wild fear.

Then he knew that he was no criminal, but a man whose mind was clouded. "Thank God!" he said, "Thank God!" And would fain have kept it a secret that such darkness and chaos had been in his soul, saying with a face twisted into what was meant for a laugh and kindliness: "I was just going to have a look at a star, up there . . . beyond yon wisps of clouds." But she came quickly up to him, and looked him sharply in the eyes.

"What?" she said. "What? No, Jörn, I tell you that will never do!"

She seized his hand and led him through the garden.

"No, Jörn . . . that won't do. That was not the tune that Larry the Piper made the people dance to. That would put the finishing stroke on our misfortunes! Nay! Now's the time to hold your head high, laddie. Your son shall never say his father was a suicide. There's nothing in it, Jörn. It's like running away leaving the plough stuck in the middle of the furrow in broad daylight. What, at thirty years of age? That's no way to knock off work, Jörn."

At first he pretended to be quite amazed at her words. Then he grew embarrassed. At last he came back, out of the far, dark distance, to himself again. Light glimmered within him once more, and he felt again the dull ache in the back of his head. He now again knew where he was and how things stood with him.

"It is a sore thing to bear," he said, wearily.

"Wait here a moment," she said; "I will go and fetch you some cold water. You must grow cooler. Stay here, do you hear? Just remain sitting where you are! I will be back in a moment, and will remain beside you all the evening."

She hastened to the kitchen, and was so quiet about what she was doing that the two girls did not notice what distress she was in. She hurried to the sitting-room and seized Jörn's little son, and ran across the big hall with him. He was still sitting there on the chest. She gave him something to drink, and as he was setting the vessel down again with a deep breath of relief, he heard the little lad at his knees saying: "My word, father, how pale you look! You'll have to take precious good care else you'll be ill."

"What's the good of it all, Wieten?" he said.

"Yes, yes, Jörn," she replied. "You're right. But it's all one, whether it's hard on you or not. It's got to be carried through. Only have patience and time will help us. For the present, laddie, lie down and have a good sleep. Quick! I know what is the right thing to do. Just see how tired you are. Lie down straight away, and sleep like the man who came to the Hill of Slumber and slept seven years! Sleep, laddie."

It was good for him to have around him the two people who belonged to him. They were so kind to him. He smiled wearily, and got up with stiff, heavy limbs, laid aside his jacket, and lay down to rest. They stayed and sat by his bedside.

When he woke two hours afterward, out of heavy sleep, hearing a voice calling him, the old groom was standing there. It was dusk, and the man was saying: "We don't know what's become of Wieten; she left the farm an hour ago, and we thought she'd gone over to a neighbor's. But she's not there. And now the girl says she saw her take the field-path toward Ringelshörn. What can she want there? There's nobody living there; and it's dark, and the ditches are full of water,

and Wieten herself says she can no longer see things in the dark."

"Where's my little son?"

"He is playing in his grandfather's room."

Jörn Uhl sprang out of bed and slipped into his coat. He was suddenly a sane man again. "I am going after her," he said, as he hurried away from the house. The cold wind beat against his uncovered head, and refreshed him. He went up the broad road, and then along the cart-way as far as the foot of the Ringelshörn without seeing any trace of her. Unable to see any distance through the heavy, rainy air, he stood there undecided, and was going to shout her name, when the thought suddenly struck him that he might find her by taking the foot-track which leads up through the valley. He had no sooner entered the dale than he saw the small crouching form of a woman before him, and he at once knew that it was she whom he sought.

He went up to her. But she heard him coming, and came toward him and said, sadly: "It's no good. I have too long neglected it all, or else I'm grown too old and dull for it."

He laid his arm around her shoulder, and took her with him. "Come back home at once, Wieten. You'll get wet through. Here, let me lay my coat over your head. That's it."

She walked along at his side, with bent body and weary steps. "In times gone by," she said, with shamefast voice, "when I was a little girl all these things were full of life for me; but now they've all gradually perished."

"What were you trying to do?"

"I don't know. I wanted to see for once whether I could really get anything out of it; but everything looked at me with cold, dead eyes."

"There is nothing in it, Wieten!"

For a time they said no more. He had his arm around her shoulder, and led her over the dry spots of the damp path.

"It comes from people losing their belief in such things," she said. "You know that yourself; when one has lost interest in sun and moon and stars, they have no more messages for one; and when one ceases to trouble about one's house, it falls to ruin. It's the same with everything. Indifference will kill anything, and love gives life to everything. I have

forgotten these things too long, and they're all rusted with long lying."

"But you must not lose courage, Wieten, for all that."

"Well, do you see, Jörn . . . this afternoon when I found you down there in your garden-house, I thought to myself: 'If *that* happens, what will become of everything?' And so, in my terror, I hurried here."

"Wieten, these things won't help us. Heath and water, wind and rain — why, those are things still more helpless than man himself. That's no place for man to go and look for help."

"Don't say that, Jörn; there lies a mystery behind this life of ours. We don't live for the sake of this life, but for the sake of the mystery behind it. And it must be possible to unriddle the mystery, and the man who unriddles it has light and truth. And in these holy old things and their legends, I should say it is to be easiest found. From as long as men can remember that's where our forefathers have looked for it, and some of them have found it."

"Yes, Wieten, there you're right. What you say about the mystery I believe is right. But I don't believe we'll ever find it out or solve it. It's like a man trying to leap over himself. Man just remains man, the same as an ash remains an ash, and our ignorance and blindness in these things goes without saying, just because we are men. For all I know, the secret's open, broad, and living, and is here, lying or standing, laughing or weeping, all around about us. But we have no organ or sense by which to see or hear it."

"Maybe, maybe," she said, sadly and thoughtfully; "but we must just go on working away till evening falls, and always be as kind and loving as we can."

"Right, Wieten. That's in the New Testament."

She raised her head a little as she walked along beside him.

"What? That's in the New Testament? What does it say, then, about — you know, Jörn — the secret?"

"Well, as far as I can make out, Wieten, it says we won't get behind it here. But we're to have faith that everything has an aim and an inner meaning. And afterward, after death, we'll get on a bit further, and come behind the secret, and see things, not as they appear, but as they are."

"Well, well! And that's what Christ says! It astonishes

me. And it must be as you say. But from a child I've always been so hungry for knowledge. I always wanted to know what was the real meaning of this life of ours. I remember when I was in service with Jörn Stuhr in Schenefeld I never did anything but try to fossick it out. But we could never find anything. And then Hans Stuhr got drowned in the Mergelkuhle." And she began to weep.

"It's no good searching, Wieten. I think Christ Himself said that even He didn't know everything. He said it wasn't necessary for us to know it. Only we should always have faith and keep pure and loving hearts. He was against all brooding and bitterness, and against all haughtiness and the wish to know everything, and against all hating and hardness of heart. 'Have faith,' He said, 'and be pure and merciful.'"

"Well, I suppose we can have faith in what He says, for He was clever and kind, and there's no doubt that He tried to do what was best, and died for it while He was quite young, so we must e'en hold fast to what He says, Jörn, and see how it turns out."

"Yes, Wieten, so we'll just stand firm together, and keep a stiff neck, you dear old soul."

And after bringing her as far as the kitchen door, the desire came over him to go and walk awhile, bareheaded, in the cool air. . . . The rain had ceased and there was no wind. As he got farther away from the farm the last sounds which broke the stillness of the autumn evening died away. In his reverie he approached Ringelshörn and climbed the slope, walking slowly and aimlessly straight away over the heath, that lay gray, dark, and desolate around him. Gradually day put out its last light, so that he saw nothing but night around him.

Once more he fell into pensive brooding over the past and over his future; and as he got deeper into the heath, it seemed to him to rise up on both sides of him in gloomy heights, crested with tall, dark fir-trees, and as though he himself were walking in a deep valley. And it was so lonely and so dark, and dead, and he came into such depths that he was almost as terrified as he had been before in the garden-house. And visions almost material filled his soul with fear. His brother Hinnerk, with angry face, went by not far from him; and Lena Tarn went past as though she did not know him;

and Geert Dose stood there with blood-stained clothes, and many another form passed by him, wandering and restless and sad. And the visions and the landscape through which they went were distorted and shuddering. But as he thus went on through the land of grief, in great and fearful solitude, — yet not without a secret satisfaction like a child in terror at ghosts, — he suddenly thought on the saying he himself had repeated not long since, that one should have faith in the triumph of the good, come what may. And immediately after he had thought that the darkness grew less dense, and the forms around him moved more quietly and assumed a kindlier demeanor, and he saw a narrow path leading upwards, passing first between lofty fir-trees that stood there like haughty men, so that he was abashed at their presence, and struck his stick firmer into the ground, and walked with head thrown back and more courageously. A puff of cool wind sprang up and strengthened him, and he again came out on the level heath and clearly perceived the line on the horizon where the heath stops and the road leads down to the marsh-lands. There he stood still and listened.

And while he stood there with everything so still around him, no sound of wind or cry of bird, he heard from far away in the forest a dull sound as of a mighty pushing and swelling, or as though with slow, measured blows multitudes of great hammers were thudding upon masses of wood and iron; the thuds sounded so ponderous that it seemed as though each beat were forging a whole human life. And from the forest came the sound of many swift, soft footsteps, like the rushing of great waters, as though ten thousand messengers were on their way, with biddings and commissions, to thrust into the hands of the children of men.

Awhile he stood there, listening to the pulsing of those everlasting, mysterious powers. Then he turned and walked toward home in silent, resolute thought.

As he entered the kitchen to see where Wieten was, she herself met him, and looked up at him, astonished and startled at the light on his proud, handsome face.

Next day at noon old Whitehead came to the farm, asking kindly after Jörn's father; and afterward, when he was alone with Jörn in the little room, he became still more confiden-

tial, and proposed that the young farmer should secretly deliver over to him certain quantities of corn they had in stock, promising that he wouldn't let Jörn be the sufferer by it. But the latter laughed in his face.

"What are you talking about?" he said. "Because I've got no luck am I to be a swindler into the bargain? If that's your idea, you're on the wrong track, old man; so now you can clear out, and as fast as you like."

After he had gone Jörn Uhl peeped into his father's room — speaking to Wieten and casting a glance into the Bible that lay there open. When he saw that she had been reading about the Egyptian plagues, he smiled and said to her, "You can make your mind easy on that head, Wieten, I've just hunted the last of them off the farm." Then, according to his usual custom, he went into his own room so as to be alone, and thought once more with a certain obdurate equanimity, "Well, now there's nothing for it but a miracle."

CHAPTER XXIII.

But no miracle happened. What happened, on the contrary, was quite in the ordinary run of things. There was a great storm and there was a death. That made the air fresh and clear again, and freed Jörn Uhl from the last of the burdens that weighed upon his heart.

The rain, too, went by; then came days full of hot, glaring sunshine; every day toward evening a heavy dark cloud gathered and lay over there toward the Elbe; and muttering and growling was heard in the distance. Some said that it was men-o'-war firing their guns off Cuxhaven, but older folk knew that it was a great thunder-storm brewing. "But it can't manage to get over the Elbe," said they. On the evening of the third day everybody thought for certain it was coming. The air was soft and expectant. The beasts in the fields stopped grazing and stood waiting by the hedges. But again nothing happened.

One of the hands from a neighboring farm rode by after vespers to the smithy, and as he passed he shouted out to the Uhl girls, who were standing near the bakehouse, "I say! I dreamt last night the Uhl was on fire! I dreamt it broke out in the west gable, and ran along the rooftree like a squirrel."

Next morning there was great excitement in the house. It was Sunday, and Wieten had, as usual, changed her linen on Saturday night, and had, after a good old custom in those parts, spread the left-off garments on the floor beside her bed. Next morning she found ashes strewn where the clothes had been. The farm-hands and maid servants clustered together, excitedly discussing the matter with all sorts of jesting ways of accounting for it; while the maid who had slept in Wieten's room shook her head and wondered how it was that she had not been awakened by the smell of fire. Wieten went about the house with frightened eyes, without a word.

The men returned to their work and brought the story to the village that same evening.

Thiess Thiessen had once more come back from Hamburg, and was staying a few days at the Uhl. He followed Jörn about the whole day long, trying to win him over to his own way of thinking, and familiarize him with the thought that he would have to give up the Uhl.

"I'm ready to help you with a few thousand marks," he said; "but, as you know, Jörn, Haze Farm can't stand a great deal of debt."

"I'm not going to let you help me," said Jörn Uhl, "and, what's more, it's not so easy to tear oneself away from the old place as you think. Down there in the Easter paddock yonder I started ploughing when I was twelve years old. Why! don't I remember it as if it were yesterday. The plough-handles jerked me from one side to the other till my head began to swim, and every time a horse'd stretch out its head, it'd drag me half over the plough with it, for I had the reins around my neck. I used to get dead tired with fright and tramping up and down the furrows."

He drew his little son, who was walking by his side, nearer to him.

"And later on, when I came home from the war and Lena Tarn became my wife, there wasn't a single post in the house, not a single lath, not a single reed of the thatch, that I didn't nod to and greet and say to 'em, 'Oho, now you're in my good keeping, and I'll look after you.' I suppose it can't be helped, Thiess, I'll have to let the farm go, but it goes sore against the grain. I'm throwing all Lena Tarn's toil and trouble to the winds. It's like selling her merry singing away to strangers, and all the bitter years that came afterward. . . . I can't bear to talk about it. And then, Thiess, what if Elsbe came back to seek refuge here and strange folk were to open the door to her! Yes, I know I must leave, for I can no longer pay the interest; but, as I said, it goes sore against the grain."

Next morning Thiess went away again. That day the thunder-storm came up.

Late in the afternoon a lurid cloud lifted itself from the sea and hung above the marshes, and in its rage began hurling straight lightning, like golden spears, at the land beneath.

Away in the distance, by the dikes, a fire blazed up. The cloud mounted higher and came nearer, and toward seven o'clock that night was lowering, full to bursting, right over the village of St. Mary's. The men who had been working in the fields made haste home. The women of the village stood in their doorways and said to their husbands, "It's a good thing you're back home." The children, too, ran in from their play and took shelter in their doorways. Then the storm burst.

"Did you hear that?"

"Yon house has been struck!"

People went out and looked about and said to one another, "There's nothing to be seen." Next moment it began to pour. The mighty cloud broke and parted, and changed to pale gray, covering the whole sky. Nothing had happened.

"What did I tell ye, Wieten?" said an old ploughman. "The story about that smock of yours . . ."

"Just you hold your whist!" said Wieten.

Wieten went back to the kitchen, and the ploughman climbed up the ladder into the loft to throw down some hay. Then Jörn's little son came running in with his five-year-old playmate, and burst out, "Kassen, we want to come up too."

"But you know you mustn't, laddie," said the old man.

"Oh, gammon! We're coming, for all that."

They climbed the ladder after him, and clambered over the sloping piles of hay till they were right at the top.

"That's the style," said the youngster; "now we can't get any further. Come here while I lift you and have a look through the owlet hole."

Soon afterward they came down again, and the old ploughman said, "Well? Have you had enough of it?"

It grew on toward eight o'clock, and Wieten sent the little fellow to bed.

"I say," he said to her, "do you know what? I've been up in the very top of the hay-loft. Me and Fritz Hansen."

"What! Hasn't your father forbidden you to do that?"

"Oh, but you won't say a word, Wieten, if I tell you something?"

"What can you have to tell me, child?"

"Why, Fritz Hansen was right up at the very top, just where the little window in the roof is, and what do you think? There was a great big black cat lying there! As big

as a calf. It had two eyes like balls of fire, and came creeping toward him."

"Now lie down and go to sleep, child," she said, and went out and spoke with Jörn Uhl.

"Jörn, have you never heard that lightning can lie in a house for hours before breaking out? That was a frightful clap of thunder, and the child talks such strange things. Just set my mind at ease by looking around the hay-loft. I'm all of a tremble."

Jörn went up into the loft and walked around the house and barns without finding anything suspicious.

It was getting on toward ten o'clock, and they had all gone to rest. Then the Lightning thought the time had come for house and inmates to be his, and got up and went forth noiselessly on his path. With long smooth body, bright as a well-used spade, he wound his way slowly between the hay and the roof. Wherever he stretched out his thin arms to grasp his prey, a red glow began to swell upwards. And when he saw that the flame could not have its way for lack of air, he crept gliding and smouldering toward the window. The barn window he split in twain. The owl, sitting beneath the gable-eaves, flew off with a loud "Oo-hoo!"

Wieten had got up and had stolen out of her room along the middle corridor, and was looking through the door-panes out into the big hall. Everything was dark and silent. Then she went back to her room and sat on the edge of the bed where the boy was sleeping, and listened.

"There are folk asleep in the house. . . . Four in this room . . . three in that . . . two in the men's room . . . and Jörn. . . . But aren't there others besides? . . . No, that must be all, though. . . . No, I'm sure there are not. The child first. And don't forget the old man! Ten Christian souls. . . . Ten . . . ten. Most of the animals are out in the pastures . . ." Suddenly she heard a sound from the big hall, and stood bolt upright again.

"There must be something going to happen. I'm sure there is. I feel it in every limb. Perhaps it's the thunder that has made me so excited. Perhaps it's something else." She stood up, listening, with body bent forward.

"Hist! hist! . . . I tell you there are noises in the house. There's a sound of things being dragged about and over-

turned; they're taking their odds and ends away with them, chains and pots and pans and all . . ." She stole toward the door again. "I used to know an old rhyme once; how did it run, now?

> "'God and Peter fare through the shire,
> They see before them a house on fire.
> "Fire, thou shalt not heat beget,
> Fire, thou shalt no longer sweat,
> Till God's dear Mother come again,
> And her second Son. . . ."'"

Before she had finished the line, as she opened the door she heard a sound of crackling from the big hall as when young wood is thrown upon a roaring fire.

"Fire!" she screamed. "Fire!"

The girl that was sleeping in the room raised herself suddenly in bed: she found the child being placed in her arms. "Go, and take the boy to Jasper Cray's; go, and don't look behind you!"

"Jörn, Jörn! . . ." It was a voice that might have waked the dead.

What sudden snatching at clothes there was, what fever of brains, what hands busying themselves hither and thither! And after it is all over, not one of them that knows what they have been thinking and doing.

Later on Jörn could never tell why he had made for the old chest first, and how he had managed to carry off the great heavy thing that had neither grip nor handle. The first thing he remembers doing was running into the bedroom, like a fireman bursting into a strange house, and wrapping in a blanket the heavy-bodied old man, who struggled and shouted with terror; then he had carried him out into the courtyard, and over the way to Jasper Cray's bedroom, and laid him in the spare bed that was always packed up on the other side of the stove.

Then running back, with the instinct of a man bred in the country, he had made for the stable, cut the three horses loose, and led the wild-eyed, rearing animals out, one by one.

One of the foals was in a bad way. Neither the stableman nor the neighbors that had come over to help could get at it;

but there was a door that had not been opened for years. Jörn suddenly thought of it, and took a crowbar which happened to be lying there and smashed down the woodwork with a couple of blows, and succeeded in getting the animal out.

There was now nothing more to be done. As he was about to go back once more, in spite of his bleeding hand and singed hair, the village schoolmaster, who had just come up, barred his way, saying, "Your life is of greater value."

Then, with a gesture of despair, he threw the knife away, and went to the front of the building, so as not to hear the piteous lowing of the cow which, with its new-born calf, was there behind the flames.

Struck by the falling thatch, and blinded with the smoke which poured forth from the big barn, he had to stand further off from the buildings; anon he approached the entrance. The fire-engine went galloping past him into the courtyard. He saw his little son run right across the road in front of the horses, and heard him weeping and crying as he came up to him and clutched his knees. "Father," he sobbed, "is the foal burnt?"

Jasper Cray came up to him, his hands and face all black, and said, "We have saved the cow, too, by the back way, through the kitchen door and the bakehouse," and then went away again.

Jörn Uhl stood gazing into the flames. His boy stood beside him.

The ceilings of the front house were already bending and twisting, and a fiery hand was clutching at the proud old rooms of the Uhl. It knocked at the doors and slid its fingers along the woodwork, scorching and burning, and the upper lintels of the door burst open, and the glowing hand snatched at the handle. The great chandelier fell with a crash on the table; the table was afire; and suddenly the yellow guest was up on the window-sill with a catlike leap, lifting the curtains and smashing in the windows. That made a fresh draught! The whole ceiling fell in, and the night sky shone through.

In this hour, when the great rooms of the Uhl were glowing in red fire, and the shooting flames were lighting the night-dark willows that lie all around Wentorf, death came stalking along the narrow churchyard path that runs by the side of the river Au. By leaving the bridge at the foal-

paddock, he managed to keep out of the firelight. He then made straight across the fields in the direction of Jasper Cray's house, which lay low-roofed and humble in the midst of the red light beneath the high, brightly gleaming poplars. Wieten Penn, who was standing by the bedside waiting for him, her eyes wide with expectation, stepped aside and made room for him. Up to the bed he strode, and laid his hand with a firm grasp upon the shoulder of the sleeping man. Twice the body twitched convulsively. Then the breathing ceased.

And Wieten Penn commenced, with Trina Cray's help, to do what was left to be done. Hundreds of people were standing and passing around the lofty burning buildings, watching the sinking flames. But hardly a single one of them went up to Jörn Uhl and his child. There had always been something strange about him, something taciturn and contemplative, and a touch of arrogance, they remembered.

"Now that he was at his wits' end, he must have turned to this as a last resource and set his own house on fire."

"By the Lord! he's standing there with a face like a criminal. Look at him! What a face!"

"What was that he said to you? . . . I must say, I never would have believed it of him."

"What! Are you going to talk to such a fellow as that? Why, it's clear as daylight. . . . You know what I mean."

Especially among the workmen (who are always inclined to pick upon the bad in their master's character, and be blind to what is good in him), there were many that spoke about him in this tone. He had indeed always been close and taciturn toward them, and almost niggardly; for he had always been worried and in want of money.

So Jörn Uhl stood for hours and hours out there beneath the poplars where the roadway bends around toward the barns. There, where he had stood that evening when he came home from the war.

But when midnight was past, two of Hargen Folken's farmhands came up and said that, as they were coming home from the fields that evening, just when the terrible thunderbolt had fallen, they had plainly seen that the Uhl was struck. They had seen a wisp of something burning fly up from the rooftree. They had at once halted and had waited, expecting that fire would break out, and had been greatly astonished

when this did not happen. The stable-boy at the Uhl, too, said that the lightning had almost thrown him down when he was out between the house and the barn, and that he had noticed a slight puff of smoke around the gable and a smell of burning in the yard. These reports soon spread, and many men and women came over to Jörn Uhl and told him what they had heard, trying to solace him with stories of other houses struck by lightning, and with their words of cordial sympathy.

When the cold of early morning came, they scattered toward their homes.

The sky was growing gray when Jörn Uhl went across the way to Jasper Cray's. A few stars were still shining high up in the sky like tired bright eyes in a face pale with much watching. When he entered the doorway Wieten stood before him and barred his path. But he saw far away over her small body, and his eyes rested on the candles around the bier and the other preparations. He put her gently aside, and, going up to the bed, looked at his father for a long time. Then he crossed over to Wieten and took her hand and held it fast within his own for awhile, saying in a voice subdued and quiet, "It's a good thing for me this night that my old Wieten is still alive."

The second day afterward, after he had taken all the necessary steps in connection with the burial and the fire, he went up to Ringelshörn toward evening and sat down upon a stone that lay by the sandy wayside in the gray and long-haired grass, and breathed deep and free, letting his thoughts wander whither they would, wondering at the restfulness and beauty of the world around him.

After sitting there for a long time, he heard a vehicle coming around the hill. The driver was talking to himself and his horses. "Now we'll have a trot for a bit. Trot, all of you! The Uhl's burnt down and Klaus Uhl is dead, and this is the end of a chapter in Jörn Uhl's life, and as for the rest of it, I tell you — Holloa, Jörn! Is that you? And you've still got a laugh left in you?"

"Thiess!" said Jörn. . . . "Let's first bury the dead as is seemly. Then I'll be able to tell how I feel."

After the funeral, when the long cortège of the Uhls and their kinsmen had left the churchyard and the mould had

been shovelled into the grave, Jörn Uhl and Thiess Thiessen and the little lad came back from Lena Tarn's tomb to see the family grave of the Uhl. The new mound was piled high with wreaths. "Do you know, Jörn," said Farmer Thiess, "what I took most amiss in this man? Not his squandering of money, nor his boozing and carousing, but his laughter. The way he had — a laugh for everybody, except my poor sister! There are not a few men like that, Jörn Uhl, who are kind toward strangers and the people they meet in the street and the tavern, and are very devils in their own homes. It's a good thing, Jörn, that there's such a thing as Death, for in Death lies the only pledge of some sort of justice. Do you mean to say that this man remains unpunished after having tortured my dear sister that's dead, and let the farm go to rack and ruin, while he rollicked and idled about the country? I tell you, Jörn, he'll have to plough precious hard in the country he's gone to now. He'll get a good tough piece of marsh-land for his portion up there, and four old spavined nags to plough with, up to all sorts of tricks, and the biggest rogue among the angels for a ploughboy. Just look there, my sister hasn't got a single wreath!" He stooped down, picked up two wreaths, and laid them on his sister's grave.

"Jörn, she was the mirthfullest and unselfishest little thing in the whole world. When she was a child she'd just sit on one corner of a tree-stump, right at the side, so that she was almost hanging from it, and say, 'Sit down, Thiess, see what lots of room there is,' — she was that unselfish! She asked nothing from life but a nice, comfortable little spot where she could sit in the sun. This fellow here refused it her. He made her sit all her life long in dark and gloomy places." He took up another wreath and laid it on his sister's grave.

"Jörn . . . if she could get up, this gentle soul" — he took up two more wreaths — "she'd say, 'Go away from the farm, Jörn, dear; go to the Haze this very day. . . . Give up the Uhl, Jörn; the Uhl has made you poor and ill. Come home with me to the home of your mother. I believe you'll get better there. . . .' So come with me, Jörn. I ask you in your mother's name. And you, too, little laddie, help me to coax him. Will you come with me to the Haze? Eh?"

"I say, father," said the youngster, "let's go! That'll be just grand."

"Jörn, the three of you had better jump up into my cart, you and the lad and Wieten. And we'll put the old chest behind the back seat in the straw. Then you'll have every mortal thing that you own in the one cart!"

Jörn turned a little and cast a long glance away over toward Lena Tarn's grave.

"Just think of the old chest, Jörn; your good clothes are in it, and the telescope and the chart of the sun and moon and all the stars, and the puzzling old books, and the old carved piece of my grandmother's mangle — old Trienke Thiessen's, whose maiden name was Sturmann. At least, I suppose you have the mangle-piece, Jörn; if you haven't, Peter Voss of Vaale has it. . . . All these things, Jörn, both us and the chest will be yours, if you drive home with me to the Haze. Here it was but a part of the Uhl and its worries; there, at the Haze, it will belong to you. Oh, Jörn, laddie, I beg you to come with us! I beg you, Jörn. Pluck your soul out of the Uhl and keep it for your own use. Now do, dear Jörn, come along with me! Else, I tell you straight out, I should always be in terror about you."

Jörn Uhl said nothing, but breathed heavily, looking away toward Lena Tarn's grave, or anon at the graves at his feet. The three graves spoke with loud voices.

After they had stood motionless awhile, Thiess said, "Now, come, we'll go and lay these other three wreaths on Lena Tarn's grave, one for each of us."

"Lena Tarn," said the child, "who is that? Lena Tarn? Why, she's my mother!"

"Yes, laddie. Ah! and what a mother she was!"

Next morning Jörn Uhl called the farm-servants and dairy-maids before him, and paid each of them the sum due for wages. Then he went to the tradesmen and paid the small accounts he owed them; and when he saw their look of astonishment, he said in his short, abrupt way, "I don't want you to be kept running about after your money afterward, or to have you cheated out of it altogether." Then they understood him, and swept the money quickly into their tills, and accompanied him to the door, and called out to their

wives to come and look at him as he stalked away down the street, beneath the lindens, with haughtier and straighter gait than they had seen him walk before. Then he returned to the ruins the fire had left, and stood once more by the blackened, half-fallen walls, not far from the kitchen door, where he had often stood; for from there a man can see far and wide over the corn-lands of the Uhl.

As he stood there, Thiess Thiessen came stumbling up to him through the dust and rubble, with his coat on and the whip in his hand. "Little Jürgen is sitting on the old chest in the cart, dangling his legs in the straw, and Wieten is just tucking him up with a brown-striped shawl. . . . How do you feel, laddie? That's right! That's the way I like to see you look."

"Thiess," said Jörn Uhl, turning toward him, "I've done with it. I'm going to let the Uhl go, and all its cares and worries with it. . . . For fifteen years I haven't had a single Sunday to myself — I believe I've been a poor, unfortunate fool. . . . But now, faith, I mean really to try and do what you said yesterday — get back my soul that I've buried here in the Uhl. I'll have it back, I say. It's mine, I tell you. . . . Come, let's be off, Thiess."

His little son was sitting on the old chest, and Wieten was stooping near the cart. "Father," said the boy, "what were you shouting about? Were you scolding, or were you laughing at somebody?"

"Both," said Jörn Uhl. . . . "Come here, Wieten, let me help you up . . . you were going to say something, weren't you?"

She looked at him thoughtfully with her grave, dark eyes. "I was thinking of the story, Jörn, of the man who spent a hundred years among the little, swarthy earthmen, and came back an old man. There's a deal of truth in those old stories, after all, Jörn."

"Yes, Wieten!" he said, and he shook as if a shiver ran through him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEN the west wind begins to blow softly over the woods that still lie covered with snow and hard frost, a long sound of crackling and splintering is heard among the pines. It is as if nothing will bend and everything will have to break. But the soft breezes creep in and slide around all the hard ice-crystals with their blandishment and their coaxing caresses, and it turns out that these softer ways at last prevail and triumph all over the earth. Everywhere love triumphs. The clink and clash and rattle of warlike weapons ceases. The icicles lower their bright lances; their coats of armor melt. Their eyes fill with tears, and they sink into the arms of the soft air. And when a man walks through the forest, he hears a sound of slipping and falling, and whisperings in mysterious monotones as in dreams.

It is a beautiful thing to behold and hear, the thawing of a forest. But more beautiful still is it to be by at the thawing of the heart of a man.

On the afternoon of the day following, Thiess Thiessen was standing by Jörn Uhl's bed, saying, "You've made a good start at being a Thiessen, Jörn; you've slept eighteen hours at a single stretch."

"Where's my boy?" Jörn asked.

He was there already. "Father, you've slept as sound as a hedgehog. I've been here ten times to see if you were awake — seven times all by myself, and three times with Thiess!"

"There you are!" said Thiess. "Fine reports of you on all sides. . . . I drove into Saint Mariendonn this morning. The smith hadn't been paid for the last spade you got, so I gave him a crown."

Jörn Uhl sat up. "And I haven't got a groat to pay you back with, Thiess!"

"What! Beginning to worry again?"

Jörn laughed as he flung himself back on the pillow.

"I'll take precious good care I don't. Everything's safe! Father and the Uhl and this little lad and Wieten! And no debts to pay and not a black look from any one. Everything straightforward and simple. As simple as a slice of black bread. You've got to keep us here for the present."

"That's clear! You stay here and we'll live cosily together and see what turns up."

"Thank you, Thiess. I'll think matters over and see what's to be done."

Next morning he went to Saint Mariendonn on foot, and talked over his position with the town-bailie, a quiet and sensible man, telling him that he didn't intend to touch the farm again. If old Whitehead didn't like to take the estate over in exchange for the debts on it, why — he would have to be declared bankrupt, he said. He didn't want a penny from it; but he didn't want a load of debts either, to begin his new life with. He had long enough had cares and debts that were heavy enough to bear; for years and years he had had a weight on his conscience, a feeling as if he had a board on his breast whereon was written in big letters, "This man has many debts." To himself he had seemed like a man damned and accursed. "But now my heart is light and glad," he said.

The bailie smiled to think of this new Jörn Uhl, after the one of old who had been so glum that you couldn't get a word out of him, but who, now that he had lost everything, talked so frankly and open-heartedly, and expressed the hope that the farm might find a good purchaser, seeing that the land was in such high cultivation and good condition. At last they agreed that Jörn Uhl, on Thiess Thiessen's security, should retain two of his horses — two riding-hacks that Lena Tarn had greatly admired as foals, and that were now tall, eight-year-old geldings, clean-limbed Holstein thoroughbreds.

When he was back in the village street, he swung his yellow oak walking-stick merrily as he walked along, stirring up the fallen leaves of the lindens that lay all over the pathways. And when he caught sight of the schoolhouse in the distance, almost hidden among thickets and lindens, his eye sought out the window behind which he had once tried to learn English;

and as he saw the garden, he thought to himself, "Lisbeth Junker will soon be back now. She'll wonder when she sees the Uhl burnt down, and finds we're no longer there. That was good of her to come over to the Uhl every year when she was visiting at the schoolhouse. A mighty fine girl she is, and bright as a new threepenny bit."

He walked nearer, and looked over the fence. The whole garden was bright with light, and rich and glad with color. The vine-leaves on the wall shimmered and shone in the bright October sunlight. A soft wind ever and anon whirled the reds and greens and yellows, and mingled them in the sunlight. But in all this gay splendor, in the midst of the crimson leaves of the vines, he beheld a peculiar spot which, among all this restful play, kept moving restlessly up and down. It was a girl sitting among the vines, shelling beans, and something had flown down her neck, and she could not see whether it was a leaf or a caterpillar, and there she stood, shaking herself, with the light dancing like a sprite on her fair hair and around her eyes.

"Hold on!" cried Jörn Uhl, "I'll lend you a hand." And ere she was aware of it there he was bending over her and saying, "There's nothing to be seen but a whole host of little flaxen curls."

She looked at him with wondering, beaming eyes.

"Oh, Jürgen," she said, "what a fright you gave me! and how happy it makes me to see you looking so well! You poor old Jörn. Now you've lost your father, too, and the whole Uhl is burnt down!"

He nodded. "We're not going to talk about that," he said; "that's past and done with. I'm ever so glad, Lisbeth, that I caught sight of you. How long have you been here?"

"Since last night. I wanted to finish the beans, and then I was going over to the Uhl to see whether I could find you and your little son. And how have you been getting on, Jürgen?"

Then he told her, in his thoughtful way, about his brother and his father and about the mice in the corn, and the agreement he had made with the bailie. And she comforted him with words of sympathy.

"What I'm going to do now," said he, "I don't exactly see."

"Oh," she said, "you'll easily find something, Jürgen.

You're a good worker, and you like work, and then you're so clever, too. So just don't worry about that."

The sunlight played gay pranks among the leaves and branches, scattering shadows and fire and color about everywhere, and some of it fell on Jörn and Lisbeth.

He was astonished to hear her speak to him in this tone. It was no mere compassion. It was real esteem, and it pleased him hugely. Such a proud and bonnie girl! "No," he said, "I've got no fears for the future; something or other will crop up. I'm going to live a few weeks, perhaps the whole winter through, without letting a single worry come near me, and then I'll decide what's to be done."

"That's right," she said. . . . "Do you know what, Jürgen? You ought to come and pay us a visit in Hamburg. I'll show you the city, and all that's in it, and you must bring your little son with you. Up to now you've known nothing but toil and labor. Now, what do you say to that?"

Jörn was almost beside himself. "Shall I tell you something, Lisbeth?"

"Do, Jürgen!"

"That is, if you care about it, and if it's good enough for you . . . we are such simple people over here."

"Do tell me, Jürgen!" She looked at him with her big eyes full of glad anticipation.

"I don't know whether I ought to venture to ask you to come and see us at the Haze. But we've both got a holiday, and we three — you and little Jürgen and me — will have the whole day long to do just what we like with."

"Oh! Jörn. . . ."

"And if you like, you can come for a drive with us, Lisbeth. I'd like to go and see an old comrade of mine who lives over there by Burg. That is, if you care about it. . . ."

Her eyes beamed through tears of joy.

"Jürgen," she said, "I'd just love to! If you really and truly want me to come, I'll come with the greatest pleasure."

He was astonished at her delight, and his spirits rose still higher.

"Who'd have thought you'd be so pleased! But I only hope we won't be too plain and homely for you. The smoked hams are from last season, and the dumplings are made of

buckwheat, and I don't know whether we'll be able to find a comfortable bed for you or not."

"Oh!" she said, "I don't care a jot about that. You don't *know* how glad I am! You don't remember how unkind you were to me sometimes when I came to see you at the Uhl, Jörn. You used to be so curt and cold, as though it was all the same to you what happened to me, or whether I thought this or that, and whether I was in trouble or not. And yet, we'd been playmates as children, hadn't we? That's what used to make me cry."

"What!" he said, "you used to cry? And for such a thing as that? . . . Lisbeth, I thought it was only out of mere politeness that you came to visit us! I fancied you came out of pity for me. Instead of that, it was from me that *you* wanted sympathy. Lassie, I can't believe it. And how gladly I would have talked over everything with you! If I'd only had an idea of it! But I was worried and bitter, and my eyes were covered with cobwebs. I always fancied you were so well off and happy."

"Oh, Jürgen, *me* happy?"

"If it's really so, Lisbeth, and you want something from me; if I can really help you . . . then . . . why! . . . Lisbeth, wherever I am . . . I will look you up, and any difficulty you're in, you can always trust to me to help you."

"Can I, really?" she said, eagerly, clapping her hands. "Oh, how glad I am that you are in such good spirits and talk to me like this!"

"That'll be splendid, to-morrow!" he said. "Thiess is coming over in the morning, so he can fetch you. My boy and I will be in ambush somewhere on the edge of the woods, so that we can capture you. We'll let Thiess find his way home by himself; but you'll have to come with us straight across country. I want to show the little chap the big stones that the witch threw. Do you remember, Lisbeth, the old witch whose hands were like a butcher's trough."

She clapped her hands. "Jürgen," she said, "I can't tell you how glad I am that you're in such good spirits and so kind to me."

Tears stood in her eyes.

He shook his finger at her and said, roguishly, "You've the same piping voice as you used to have."

She laughed. "Just be quiet," she said; "you'll see, all your old faults, too, will be cropping out again, now you're back here."

"Had I any?"

"What conceit! Why! sometimes your thoughts used to be all sixes and sevens, and sometimes you would be too hot-tempered, and sometimes you would show the Uhl side of your nature," she said, striking her hand against her breast, mimicking the way a braggart talks.

"Oh!" said he, "so that's the sort of fellow I was. And now as I go over the heath I'll try to think what you used to be like, too. But it's time for me to be off. I feel ever so much better, Lisbeth. I'd never have thought that you were such a dear, good little soul."

"Nor I that you would be so gay and light-hearted to-day."

"That's because I'm free from worry. I used to have nothing but heavy thoughts before — thoughts that walked about like workmen in a mill staggering under the heavy sacks of flour they carry on their shoulders. But now these same thoughts have all turned into grandees and go about in fine clothes, spying out pretty maids that sit under vine trellises. So now, good-by, Lisbeth, till to-morrow."

"Good-by, Jürgen; kiss the little fellow at home for me."

He shook hands with her and said good-by. She followed him with her eyes till he was out of sight. Then smiling and thoughtful she slowly gathered her beans together. But while she was still doing so — was it because something else had fallen down her neck? — she shook herself and cried out, "Marie, Marie!" Her friend came running out, with her child in her arms, and asked what was the matter. Then she said, "Oh! do you know who's been here? Do you know who's been sitting here, right on this seat? And has been chatting with me in the merriest mood in the world?"

"You surely can't mean Jörn Uhl?"

Then the other, the fair-haired maid, nodded and laughed, and ran off into the house.

Next day, sure enough, there she was sitting in the cart beside Thiess and looking like a beautiful young rose-bush beside a little dried-up elderberry-tree. And Thiess laughed all over his face when he saw Jörn and his boy standing there

on the outskirts of the wood. She did not want to get down out of the cart, he held his arms so high and made such a gloomy face, but at last she ventured.

She and the little fellow immediately ran off together, straight across the heath to the Haze. She paid no heed to any one but him, as though she had come to the Haze as she had formerly done to the Uhl, only to have a look at the little boy. All day long she behaved in the same way. Jörn had meanwhile strolled over to the moor with Thiess to see how the turf was getting on. When he came back, he found her still playing with the child. They were jumping backwards and forwards over a ditch, and both seemed to find the greatest delight in their occupation. When he came up to them she said to her little playfellow, "Time's up now, I must go and help Wieten," and ran away into the house like a weasel into its hole in the bank. An hour later he met her in the front hall, and she was just tying a cloth around her head and saying she was "going to help Wieten to brush down the walls of the kitchen, which were simply disgraceful." That was a little too much for him. He caught hold of her good-humoredly, turned her around, deliberately untied her kerchief and apron and threw them both in the corner, saying, "Now we'll go over to the Haze together."

"Little Jürgen shall come too."

"Little Jürgen shall stay where he is."

She pouted, and told him it was taking rather too much for granted to think she was going to do whatever he told her.

"Will you just go and put on your hat, please?"

"No, but I will put on something warmer."

She went and got her pretty little black jacket and held it out toward him. He put his stick in the corner, and said, "Now tell me what I'm to do."

"Don't be pretending. You can hold a jacket while it is being put on, can't you?"

"I've never done so in my life, either for man or woman. Goodness! But what a fine little coat! And lined with silk, too, isn't it? I've never seen such a thing in all my born days. Well, let's try."

She had now put it on, but it did not sit properly yet. She twisted herself and stretched her arms, trying to get the wide, roomy sleeves of her house-dress into the jacket, but could not.

"Just come here," he said, "I'll help you."

She gave another twist. "It's all right now," she said.

"Do you see?" said he. "You're just the same as you were as a child. It's always 'Touch me not,' always hoity-toity and proud. An Uhl is not a patch on you!"

"Jürgen," she said, and her eyes looked straight and reproachfully at him, and her voice was clear and high. "I'm only quiet and undemonstrative, nothing more. If you could see into me you'd think differently."

"No, Lisbeth," he said, "don't be put out. But I've always had the feeling that you were much too grand to have anything to do with me; and *that,* together with my unhappy position, is the reason why I have been so reserved in these last years."

She looked at him roguishly, and said, "Just tell me, then, Jürgen. What is there so grand about me?"

He grew embarrassed, and concealed his uncertainty by assuming a very grave air.

"Well," he said, "in the first place, it's your figure, you know. It's like the young linden that grows near the corner of the schoolhouse by the garden gate. Your whole figure and gait have something fresh and far-away about them."

She gave a little pull at her jacket, and said, with a laugh, "Go on! I like hearing you describe me, though."

"And then your face! It looks as if this beautiful sunny day had only made it this very morning. And eyes of such dour earnestness, without taking into account that you hold them quite different in your head when you look at me."

"I don't, Jürgen!"

"And when you speak, you make such a pretty fuss with your mouth, that one likes looking at you just to see its manœuvres. Your mouth has grown broader and quieter."

"Well, have you done now?"

"Do you remember, too," he said, "that you would never give Fiete Cray your hand when we wanted to help you over the embankment? No, there you'd stand. You wouldn't slide down, for your dress would have got dirty! Besides, it wouldn't have looked nice. Then you would call out 'Jürgen! Jürgen!' I can still hear your voice from the top of the embankment. Do you see? That's the sort of girl you were!"

"And why was I? Because Fiete Cray's hands weren't always too clean, as you very well know."

"Yes, child; but what about my hands, now? What haven't they had to take hold of? When my brother's body lay on the floor of the hall . . . Oh, I'm not going to think about it! You're too good for such a hand as that, Lisbeth."

"Give it to me," she said; and before he realized what she was going to do, she had caught hold of his hand and laid it to her cheek. "That's what I think about it," she said.

A tremor ran through his body. He held her hand fast, and said, somewhat haltingly, "You are my own dear little playmate."

They had now reached the edge of the forest, and he showed her the spot where the slope of the embankment, for about the length of a man, was clad with thick moss.

"Will you sit down here a little?"

To his great surprise she did so. "Here," she said, "the four of us once lay."

"Where are the two others?" said he.

She stroked the moss at her side and wanted to say something, and gazed down on the ground before her. At last, she spoke. "I won't have any peace of mind, Jürgen, until you think rightly about me. I'm neither proud nor prudish. Look, Jürgen! You remember that time we met in the apple orchard? It was a comical affair, wasn't it? You were reasonable and natural, and I behaved ridiculously. As for the reason why I wouldn't dance with you at the ball afterward, you know what it was perfectly well already, and perhaps you've thought differently and more wisely about it since then. And then, that I didn't have more to do with Elsbe; see, Jürgen, I know how loyal and good her heart was, and she was shrewd enough, too. When she was quite young, she looked upon life with remarkably clear and sensible eyes, whilst I, for a time, was a cross-grained and foolish thing. She was never greatly smitten with things that aren't worth caring and talking so much about, — curtain-lace and such things, — but looked on what was real and true. In that she was your true sister, Jörn. . . . But you have never heard what a plight she was in. You don't know that, when you were a soldier, she got up in the night and stole through the dark village up to my window and passed half the night with me. Then

she cried bitterly and complained about her restlessness. Then in winter, when the ball season came, she was so wild and beside herself that people began to talk about her." She drew a deep breath, not daring to look up at him.

"You see, Jürgen, I am not free from this either. You mustn't think me stupid and silent, and hard-hearted and indifferent. It is a thing I have kept shut up in my soul. It and religion are my heart's two most secret things."

"Aren't they two quite separate things?"

"I think not, Jürgen. Are they not rather like brother and sister? I hope you don't think that religion is from God and nature from the devil. For they are both from God, and should dwell side by side, and be of mutual help to each other."

She passed her hand lightly over the moss. "See, this is the pride of which you complain. I live in a nice house. The walls are cleanly whitewashed, and the windows are brightly polished, and not too high, and have a bit of curtain in them. But if any one thinks that a pious old maid lives there, — you know, Jürgen, that sort of lamblike piety, — then they make a mistake. In my clean little room behind the curtains I often sing and laugh aloud and dance, and many a time I throw myself out full length on the carpet and weep my fill, without the least idea why I do such things."

He looked down on her with bright eyes. The trees behind her had leaned over a little toward her in order to hear everything she said, and the evening sun rolled golden balls over the moss. Jörn was in the midst of a fairy-story and didn't know it.

"It's strange how things have gone with you and me," he said; "yesterday I came to you, and to-day you come to me."

Now, for the first time, she looked up at him. "If you like, Jürgen, we will be fast friends again, and remain so all our lives."

He struck his stick on the ground and said, "No greater gift can I desire, Lisbeth, than a human soul to whom I can unburden my heart. I have never had any one like that since Fiete Cray disappeared behind Ringelshörn, and Lena Tarn made ready to die. I have been a lonely man, and in my loneliness I have grown odd and strange, and my heart has frozen."

"But now you're beginning to thaw, Jörn. Now you join hands again with life where you left it as a boy. You're

still young enough for that. Oh, what a strange fellow you were! So dignified and so grave! You got that from the Haze people."

"Now," said he, "come. We'll go home and we can talk matters over to-morrow. We'll talk over what I'm to do. If you're my comrade, you'll have to stand by me and give me counsel in that, too."

"Do you know what?" she said. "Maybe in the next few months you won't be able to look after little Jörn very well. You can scarcely leave him here. It's too far from the school for him. I wish you'd just give him into my charge, Jürgen. We've such good schools, and I . . . I stood at his mother's death-bed."

"Would you do that, Lisbeth?"

CHAPTER XXV.

WHEN Jörn Uhl came back fairly early next morning from the moor, where he had been with Thiess, he thought, "Ah, now both of them shall get up at once, and come with me out on to the heath." But as he went through the kitchen he met Wieten, who said to him, "I'm to give you their greetings, Jörn, and tell you they're not at home to you till the afternoon. You are to spend the forenoon with Thiess."

"Well, if that's not . . . Wieten," said he, "she and the youngster are a regular pair of conspirators."

"And no wonder, Jörn. As far as age goes she might well be his mother, and she thinks such a lot of him. It's no mere make-believe."

He returned obediently to the moor and did not come home till noon, when he found the two of them just arrived.

"Well, have you got on well together to-day?"

"We haven't had a single quarrel!" said the boy; "and we've told each other some splendid stories. This afternoon you can come with us, too, father."

"Well, that's something, at any rate," said Jörn.

Lisbeth blushed and then laughed. "We are going to do just what we like with you. This afternoon you're to be allowed to go with us to the Rugenberg; we want to see the Hun's grave."

"Where the dead man used to lie in it," said the boy.

"All right!" said Jörn.

They had walked nearly an hour through the Haze woods, and then over a heath, and had come down across the meadows to a little wooden bridge, and climbed up on the other side through a tiny forest, and there they saw the Rugenberg lying before them. It is quite a considerable hill. From there you

have an outlook over a wide moor stretching as far as the chains of hills on the other side.

On the summit, beneath young pines and beeches, ancient graves have been opened.

When the three had climbed up as far as the beeches, "I say, Lisbeth," said the little boy, "shall we have a bit of a rest here?"

"What do you say, Jürgen?"

"Father, have you got a knife on you? Then let's just make a hole in the ground and have a game of marbles."

"What an idea!" said Jörn. "What put marbles into your head?"

"Oh! we had a game yesterday, too," said Lisbeth.

"Do you remember the last time that we two played marbles, Lisbeth?" said Jörn.

"Yes, and you quarrelled about them."

He laughed. "I'm not so sure of that. You put your hand in the hole and grabbed the marbles."

"I'd won them," she said.

Jörn Uhl was scooping out a hole with his knife. "You had not won them! The sixth marble had stopped on the edge of the hole. You saw that, but you thought it was better to make a dash for them. That was always the way with you, with your grand airs. You'd always get in a huff the moment any one contradicted you."

"Oh! Indeed! . . . I could tell you to this day how the marbles lay. There wasn't the shadow of a doubt about it. Just hand the marbles here to me! This one was in the hole in this position."

"That's only on the edge!" said the little fellow. "You'd have to have another shot!"

Jörn knelt down opposite the two of them. "Do you hear what the youngster says?"

She laid the marble once more on the sloping side of the hole, close to the edge. "Here's where it was."

It rolled down.

"What did I tell you?" he exclaimed. "Can the marble stop there on the slope?"

Then of a sudden she stretched out her hand, snatched up the marbles, and held them clenched in her fingers in her lap,

looking away over his head the while, as though she were all alone there.

He laughed. "That's just the way you did last time, and I caught hold of your ear and pulled it for you."

"Oh! and what made you do such a thing as that?"

"Because you were spoiling the game! But you! you couldn't bear me to touch you. How could such a rough fellow take hold of such a dainty girl!"

"You hadn't any right to pull my ear."

"No, *I* . . . *I* hadn't any right, but *you,* you were always right. 'Jürgen, let's have a game! Jürgen, let's see how the wind is on Ringelshörn! Jürgen, let's go and catch sticklebacks!' But when Jürgen wanted to be a real comrade and wanted to treat you as he would a mate, then you always got into a temper and put on a frightened look. And you'd do just the same now! Such a touch-me-not! The man who wants you for a wife will be a rash fellow."

He looked at her with a strange mixture of roguishness and embarrassment, but seeing what a confused look she had in her eyes, he said in the soft tone which he had always used to her when she was angry, as a child, "Give the marbles here, Lisbeth. Now, just see if we can't finish that game we were having. The one who fires six out of seven into the hole shall have been in the right that other time."

"No," she said, "I'm not going to stake what rightly belongs to me in that way."

"No more will I!" said the boy.

"Well, just as you like," said Jörn. "Just as you like," and he began to fire a few shots with the marbles that were still lying there. She gazed straight before her with a saucy look on her face.

But when she saw that he fired so timidly that he didn't get more than one into the hole, she guessed her chances weren't so bad. She broke into a ringing laugh, and said, "Well, come on! I'm ready!"

Now they were both hard at it, and their heads came nearer and nearer together, while the youngster lay almost over the hole making fun of the bad shots, and crying at intervals: "Just let me have a shot!"

"No! Afterward!"

But Jörn, in spite of the uneven ground, at last managed to get six into the hole.

But at the same moment she snatched the marbles up, and said: "Why, Jürgen, you've been cheating! You had your thumb in front of the hole!"

But at the same moment he had her by the ear and was shaking her. He looked at her, however, with fear and embarrassment, thinking, "I wonder how it'll end this time!"

But she bent her head so that his hand lay soft between her cheek and shoulder, and looked at him with a shy smile.

He drew his hand slowly back and said in a low voice, trembling with emotion, "You are different from what I thought, after all, Lisbeth. How sweet and pure your face is! It still has the look of the little Rain-tweet of old in it."

The youngster, who had found it somewhat tedious waiting, had gone up toward the summit of the hill. Suddenly he called down, "Look, father! Do you see that man sitting up there in the grass? Do you know who he is?"

"I don't see any one. Where do you mean?"

"There! can't you see him? Shall I tell you who he is?"

"Who, then?"

"It's Heim Heiderieter. Why, he's sold calves to you many a time!"

"Bless me! so it is," said Jörn, springing up. "Do you see, Lisbeth?"

Heim Heiderieter was already on his feet looking down at them in astonishment. "Who be ye?" he cried. "May Wodan fill ye with dread and Thor lift his hammer against ye. . . . But let Freya guide the soul of this woman that she may look kindly upon me. . . . Oh, it's you, Jörn Uhl! And what does Jörn Uhl want here with his star-gazing? — Here, where the footprints of our fathers lie in the graves? What! Lisbeth Junker! He shall be welcome on this sunny height, because he has brought you and the little lad with him."

Lisbeth and the boy ran on ahead, and Lisbeth gave him her hand, and said, in a swift whisper, "You've heard, haven't you, that Jürgen has given up the farm? But he's glad he's got rid of all the worry of it. Don't go talking to him about old times."

"What's she twittering about there?" asked Jörn; "it's

just for all the world like a finch on the kitchen window-sill. . . . What brings you here, Heim?"

"Well, I'll tell you," said Heim. "A year ago Peter Voss of Vaarle and I, and a few others, opened an old stone room up here, and found in it a dead man, whom we sent to the museum at Kiel."

"Whereabouts was he lying?"

"Just there! Do you see? In that little gray stone chamber. . . . Now, I was in Kiel not long ago, and had a talk with my dear friend, Pastor Biernatzki of Hamburg, and stood for the second time before the poor skeleton, and looked at the few blackened remnants of the boat that the man had been buried in. And Biernatzki said to me — you know Biernatzki, don't you, Jörn? He and I once paid you a visit at the Uhl — a tall, black-haired man. 'Well, Heim,' said he, 'you'll just have to write an account of this fellow's life.'

"'Why?' I asked. 'Because he's got such a wonderfully strong set of teeth, eh?'

"'No,' he said, 'but because the back of his head is so well shaped, I believe that man must have had a remarkable mind.'

"That's what he said, and that's why I've come here. . . . And — what do you think?" he said, striking the grass with his hand; "here, on this spot where they buried him three thousand years ago, I have discovered what sort of a life he lived!"

"I say, Heim!" exclaimed Jörn Uhl, "there you are, letting your imagination run away with you again."

But Lisbeth Junker proposed that Heim should tell them the story straight away.

"Well, you'll have to sit down opposite me," said Heim, "for I like looking at you. And Jörn Uhl mustn't wear such a superior look on his face. Of course he thinks I'm making it all up. But, I tell you, Jörn, there's just as much truth in what I'm going to tell you about that dead man as there is in your talk about geological strata or the seeds of wild flowers. I'm going to tell you gospel truth."

"Well, go ahead! We've got time enough."

So Heim Heiderieter stretched himself out full length, supporting his curly head in his hand, and related the following story:

"If you go down this hill into yonder hollow, you come to

the old bed of a brook. Every spring and autumn the water still gathers and lies there and washes down all sorts of earth into it, and the valley of the brook becomes a broad green strip in a meagre environment.

"Three thousand years ago a powerful little stream flowed there. For all these hill-ridges around about us were in those days decked with a thick confusion of trees. Lindens and beeches, birches and oaks, grew and struggled side by side. A profusion of hazels and sloes and wild apple-trees flourished and burrowed around the knees of their great brethren, and where one of the giants had fallen in some April storm, they spread themselves out and fought to get at the light.

"The woods on the heights and the waters in the lowlands were the lords of the country in those days. Man didn't count for as much then as he does now, but he was already so far advanced that he no longer felt such fear of the wild beasts, whose strength was greater than his. Here and there, between the waters and the woods, where the ground had been cleared, stood, lonely and isolated, the dwellings of men. Trunks of young trees were put up on the bare ground as beams and cross-pieces, and covered with reeds from the edge of the marsh, and the roof was weighted with heavy masses of turf, to give the building strength to withstand the onslaughts of the autumn winds, and to break the power of the heavy rains.

"By the side of the narrow brook, beneath great spreading beech-trees, there dwelt in those days a man in the full strength of his early manhood. In his youth he had borne some other name, but now that he was grown up people always called him the Boatman, from his passion for scooping out little boats of linden-wood, and fitting them with tiny sails of bast, and sailing them on the brook. And after he had finished his experiments with these toy vessels, he made a big boat with a great mainsail of ox-hide after the same model, and made trials with her in the Elbe Bight — a place where nowadays you'll find nothing but fen-lands. He was so taken up with his carpentering and his experiments, that the whole summer went by without his paying any heed to the maidens who used to bathe and shout and splash at the bend of the stream. Nor did he trouble his head about fields or cows, or dogs to hunt with in winter. For, like all inventors, he was thoughtless

and unpractical, and forgot to make provision for the hard times of winter.

"Thus whilst he played at making bast-sails and sailing his little boats the summer passed by. But when winter was come and his hunger was great he hurried away through snow and the cold east wind — for his wolfskin was thin and worn — to the hut that lay away down by the brook. In that secluded spot there lived an old man who did nothing all the summer long but look after his field of barley and tend his herds of swine beneath the oaks, while all the winter all he did was to boil this barley in a big soup-pot, and, after draining the vessel dry, he would get up from his hearth-fire and reach upwards into the blue gray smoke where heavy, broad flitches of bacon were hanging. There the Boatman lay all the winter, surrounded by fire and smoke and boiling barley and flitches of bacon, gravely discussing such themes as whether Thor's hammer were made of gold or bronze, whether the men who died young in their huts without ever having done valiant deeds would ever come into Wodan's halls, whether the time would ever come when human beings would be able to build a boat big enough to hold a hundred people. And so on.

"When the first days of spring came the Boatman emerged from the smoke and went down into the creek, washed off the crust of grease and grime that had gathered on him in the long winter, and returned to his work, all spick and span, with his skin ruddy and firm and fresh.

"But one day, in the very midst of his work, a great thought flashed upon him. It came down on him with a swoop, as if it had been one of the eagle-hawks that he had seen circling in the sky above him. He would build quite a different sort of boat, he thought. Yes, he would bend supple young trees to the form of a boat, bind them together with strips of hide, and cover them over with ox-skin, and so get a big, light boat, such as no one had ever thought of. He worked at his idea throughout the whole of that summer, and sometimes was so downhearted over it that he would put his head between his knees and not move for hours, and then anon he would be so jubilant that he would dance around the wooden framework of the boat in sheer delight. Everybody was curious as to how it would turn out. Most of them made fun of him. The maidens came and said, 'Oh! it's going to be a great success,

Boatman.' But when they talked among themselves, they said, 'Tush! it will come to nothing.'

"One rough day in autumn he dragged the new boat down to the water. Everybody stood on the bank watching how he fared. But the first attempt was a failure. The boat was all lopsided. It wobbled and was as unsteady as a leaf in the wind. It capsized, and he had to swim a long way to save himself. On the bank he was received with a storm of loud jeers and laughter, the cries that always greet the inventor, whether poet, scientist, or statesman, when his plans miss fire.

"He did not go away and hang himself, but a dour and bitter anger filled his heart. He sat down on his stool opposite the hearth-fire and stayed there for weeks. His flaxen beard grew longer and longer. Still he did not stir. Longer still it grew. Still he sat there. It grew so thick that you could not see his tight-shut lips. It grew so long that it swept the ground before the hearth. Still he sat there. He sat crouching upon his stool, and his thoughts were bitter. But every evening at dusk he got up and went out into the storm and snow, and stayed there half the night, fighting with the wolves for the hares and the birds, and with the otters for the fish they had caught, and thus he obtained a meagre subsistence and grew inured to all weathers, and expert and lithe in the front and the side jump. This was the life he led until the middle of the winter.

"Then one day the people of the settlement felt the want of him. For since the death of merry-hearted Baldermann, who, even when his hair was white, had given the maidens new songs to dance to every spring, the young Boatman had been wont to fix for them the day when the sun would turn back toward spring. Then at his bidding they had always celebrated the Yuletide. So now they sent a messenger to him with a kindly word on his lips and the hind quarter of a calf in his hand. But scarcely had the Boatman caught sight of the messenger entering his hut than he sprang up, and without a word threw him out. The hind quarter went flying after him. So the folk celebrated the Yuletide by guess that year, trusting to the word of old Mother Gruhle, who told them that the time of the festival must be at hand, for she had only five pots of *schwarz-sauer* left hanging up under the rooftree — a sure sign that the Yule feast was nigh.

"And when the festival was celebrated, and men drank deep, and began, after the custom they had even in those days, to go from hut to hut, they even had the drunken courage to go down and visit the Boatman, too. Six men came reeling into his hut, shouting and waving their cow-horns over their heads. The Boatman first looked them up and down, then he suddenly sprang to his feet and, without more ado, threw them out of the door, two at a time, with such vehemence that they went sliding feet first over the ice on the brook. When this became known it made folk knit their brows; for never yet had a man among them been known to spurn their Yuletide merrymaking.

"The winter was long and stark. In the smoky huts their eyes grew dim. From long lying their bodies lost their litheness, and their minds grew dull from everlastingly gazing at the thatch above them. And so at last, when spring came, they were beside themselves with joy. They were much blither folk in those days than we are now. Some with loud shouts pulled down the front walls of their huts, others bound garlands of birch-twigs around their hips and danced together in the sunshine. Others leaped into the brook. Others went out a-hunting in the forest, and their children tried in play to imitate what was done. The Boatman alone remained at home in his hut. When they saw that he was angry even with the sun in the house of heaven and with Freya in the forest, they knew that he was the sport of evil spirits.

"Now in the settlement there was a maiden whose body was as lithe as a cat's, and who could do all sorts of tricks; and this maiden was a merry rogue to boot. She was the best at the games in the meadow. She could swim under water like an otter, and, by holding her hands up between the hearth-fire and the thatch of the roof, she knew how to make shadows that looked like animals and men; and she knew, moreover, all sort of stories about trees and beasts and men. One morning, while she was bathing, an idea came into her head: 'I will go and have a look at his long beard,' she said.

"So she came up out of the brook and put on her bright dress of light wool which she had striped with the juice of the wild cherry, and tightened her leathern girdle, and she was in such a hurry that the little axe, hanging from her girdle in its beautiful leathern sheath, fell to the ground. Around

her bare arm, above and below the elbow, she put strong clasps of shining red bronze. Running to her mother's hut, she cried, 'Mother, let's play at Freya vanquishing the bad fairies, and I will be Freya. So give me your breast-shields and the necklace of yellow pearls.' Her mother scolded her, but gave her the two red shields as big as hands, which she quickly put on, and the pearls, which she twined among her wild, fair hair. Then she stole away under the great spreading beech-trees to his hut.

"She stooped and entered in, seeking with wide-opened eyes and beating heart near the little hearth-fire and trying to make out his form. For her roguish mood had by this almost dwindled to nothing. But when at last she saw a pair of deep eyes, full of bitterness and anger, gazing at her in silence, she suddenly thought of another plan. She made a quick dart with her hand into her dress, where she always carried six knuckle-bones, and, kneeling down, she began to toss them in the air. As she went on playing, she thought, 'You've got yourself into a pretty fix this time! Oh, goodness me! if I were only safely outside again!'

"She went on playing while he kept gazing at her. At last she could not bear the pain in her shoulders any longer. The knuckle-bones rolled on the ground.

"Then she held out her empty hands toward him, and said, 'The sun is shining, the birds are merry. We play all day long by the brook.'

"Then for the first time in six months he spoke: 'Who sent you hither, wench?'

"When she heard that her spirits went up, and she laughed aloud, saying, 'Oh! I've come of my own accord. I don't want you to sit here and grow so black and sour, Gittigitt. Don't be a mole and hide away like this from the sunlight. Come out into the sun.'

"'Go your way in peace,' he growled.

"'You should just see what you look like,' she said. 'Your beard is like an old fir-tree. Shall I show you what you look like?'

"She stirred the sleeping fire with her oaken staff; twined her hands together, and looked at the shadow on the wall. 'Look,' she said, 'like that.'

"He gave a fleeting glance. 'It's not true,' he growled.

"'No, it's not. Wait a moment. . . . Now, now it's right. Look again!'

"He took another fleeting look. 'It's not true,' he said.

"'Not true? Any one can say that! Just look at your own shadow, there on the thatch. Just look at that face of yours, I say!'

"He turned his head in that direction, and nose and beard vanished, and in their stead was nothing but a big, dark, round shadow.

"She clapped her hands together so that the bracelets clashed and rang again. 'Oh, what a simpleton you are!' she said. 'Come here!' She caught him by the beard and held it fast. 'Now turn your eyes slowly toward the wall. Do you see it now?'

"He gave his head a violent shake and drew it back. 'Let go my beard,' he said, 'and take yourself off out of this.'

"She looked at him searchingly, and thought, 'I won't win him over in that way,' then she began slowly to gather up the knuckle-bones. Suddenly she held her shut hand out toward him and said: 'Odd or even? If you don't guess right you must come with me, if you guess it, then —'

"'Then you stay here with me. . . . Odd!' She wanted to cry 'No!' and escape, but he had caught her hand and forced it open.

"There were four in it.

"She heaved such a deep breath of relief that the woollen garment on her breast grew tight. 'You've lost. Freya! What a fright I got. Now you'll have to come with me.'

"'Bewitched are these knuckle-bones of yours,' he cried. 'I will bite them in pieces with my teeth and stay here; or, if I don't, you can lead me through the village with a willow-wand.'

"'Do it!' she said, angrily, 'with those wolf's teeth of yours.' He bit and snap went his tooth, but the knuckle-bone remained whole.

"'I've won! I've won!' she cried. 'That's twice! I'll go and bring a willow-switch, and you must come with me.'

"She ran out, and came back stripping the leaves off the willow with her ringed hand.

"'Get up!' she said.

"As he stood up obediently, she could no longer restrai

herself. 'Do you think,' she said, 'that you're going out with me into the meadows in this plight, so that everybody may laugh at you, as they did when the boat capsized? I've only come to make you give up sulking, and to get you forth out of the hut.'

"'Give me the switch. I will go with you as I have said. They *shall* laugh at me!'

"But she looked at him with gleaming eyes. 'I won't,' she said.

"'Then I'll not go with you!'

"Tears of anger filled her eyes and made the whole hut seem afire. 'Then stay here till you're black!' she said, as she threw down the switch and ran out.

"For three days she hid herself among the thick branches of a willow-tree that hung over the bank, and for three days she gazed with dreamy eyes into the brook, seeing his eyes gleaming through the water. But on the morning of the fourth day she thought, 'What can't be, can't be,' and began to call from her hiding-place with the voice of the brown owl, so that at first the children and then the old people came running together. Then she was discovered, and got a scolding from the old women for imitating the death-bird. But she laughed and mingled with the others again, and was the same as she had been before.

"In the course of that summer there was such a drought in the land that young people from the hills, on the other side from the Dietmargos, crossed the bight on foot, stole into the woods, and, looking down from the heights, spied out the course of the brook and beheld the beautiful meadows and the cattle. The place pleased them, for they were close pressed where they lived on the other side at the edge of the fens or on the barren heights. The fruitful marsh-land was then not yet in existence. It still lay beneath the sea.

"So one day, with much leaping and wading and swimming, they crossed the bight, losing in the water on the way three men who were drowned in the slime, and arriving eight hundred strong at the brook.

"Then young lads ran through the meadows from herd to herd, calling all the men to the battle. But they were a great confused mass, like a swarm of ants disturbed, for they had no leader. Their chief had died that winter.

"In the Boatman's hut, away up on the brook, at last the shout was heard, 'To arms! there are foes in the valley!'

"Then he, too, leapt up, stretched his limbs, and rejoiced at the hour that gave him back to the sun and to his fellow men. He buckled on his broad belt with sword and dagger, seized his oaken shield and his spear of ash, and sprang out of his hut bareheaded. The others had already gone down to meet the enemy.

"But as he hurried down beside the brook he saw by chance — it was a day in autumn — a great overripe bilberry-leaf floating on the water. It was a rounded oblong in shape, and hollowed out like a trough, and in the middle of it, on the bottom, lay a little pile of berries, like a cargo. Smoothly and safely it floated on the brook in the sunshine, and when he saw it a sudden thought flashed upon him as if from heaven. 'That's the way you must build boats. With stem and ribs and a cargo in the bottom, you can build as big as you like . . . and it will go steady and safe.' He threw himself on his knees and carefully examined the delicate craft, pondering as to how he should set about imitating it. 'That will be a different sort of vessel from your boats made out of a single oak trunk.' Shield and ash-spear lay beside him unheeded on the grass.

"But while he still lay there he heard the wild shouts from down yonder ringing along the brook. He saw his people coming toward him in full flight. Then he ran to meet the enemy, crying, 'Let it be between me and the chief!'

"'Are you the chief?' the enemies cried.

"And the fugitives, with fear in their very bones, cried: 'Yes, the Boatman is our chief. We choose him now!'

"'A folk without a leader is like a swarm of bees without a queen,' said the others, generously. Then they stuck their swords in the earth in a circle, and the two men fought there on the edge of the stream, and were equally matched both in skill and strength and in courage. And so it came about at last that both of them, wounded to the death, sank fainting to the earth.

"Old women came with thick, heavy cobwebs to staunch the blood, and also tried healing herbs and spells, but the bleeding would not cease. Then said the Boatman: 'He of

us two who first goes into the land of the dead, he shall be counted for vanquished.'

" So the two men lay fronting each other, their eyes turned upwards. Each of them fighting hard to ward off death. Now and again the one or the other of them had himself lifted up in his comrade's arms, to search his opponent's face and see whether he were about to depart. At last, however, when the sun was setting, the dark shadows came so close to them that the light seemed to grow dim in their eyes. And the strange foeman died first, then the Boatman. Thereupon the enemy left the land again.

" For three days the women sang death-dirges on the brook-side in front of his hut, whilst the men dragged great stones up on to this height and shaped them and built of them a chieftain's grave. Then they laid him, clad as he was and adorned with his weapons, in the oaken boat that he had last made, and bore him amid the loud weeping of the women up to this hilltop. And behind the procession went with heavy gait his red and white cow which was to be sacrificed for the death-feast. And last of all came tottering old Mother Gruhle, pressing her biggest and best pot of *schwarz-sauer* close to her breast.

" They lowered the dead man in his boat down into the grave. They laid the pot of *schwarz-sauer* at his feet, so that he might have something to eat on his journey into the land of the dead. They put his wooden stool beside it, so that he could rest on the way, for his path lay across a wide and desolate land. They drew his good sword from its sheath that it might be ready to his hand, for that land was full of wild beasts. In this way, as they thought, he would, after all, succeed in reaching the blessed abodes of the good and the brave.

" Last of all the maiden came forward who had once seen the dead man's eyes in the brook for three whole days. With a jerk she tore her delicate hammer-knife from her girdle, knelt down and dropped the beautiful, golden, glittering thing into the tomb. She wished to do her part toward his sure and safe arrival. It fell near the head of the dead man, with its point toward his ear.

" They all stood around the grave, and all the women wept, praising his handsome looks and his boats and his last valiant fight. And the maiden, too, wept sore.

"Then they laid a heavy, close-fitting stone over the vault and built a hearth over it, killed the cow, gave good and evil spirits the udder and the bones of the legs, keeping for themselves the hind quarters and shoulders and the fleshy parts of the ribs, and roasted them, and a little to one side of the grave here where we are sitting they began their death-wake, and gradually grew festive and merry. It was an autumn evening like to-day.

"After the meal, when the old people were still lying around the fire, the grown-up youths and maidens, a little apart from them as is their fashion, were sitting around the fresh grave chatting. One maiden sat in the midst of them and told how several moons ago she had been at the Boatman's, and how she had played knuckle-bones before him. 'Oh, but I can't tell you how frightened I was. You know, there was always something strange about him.' And she told them how she had caught him by the beard. 'Oh, if you had only seen his face!' And as she thought of it she began to laugh. She laughed so much that she struck her hands on the gravestone and laid her head on it. She was laughing still when she loosened her girdle in her parent's hut and threw back the wolfskin rug under which she slept.

"That was how this man perished. Because he was an artist, some will say. For it is the habit of men to drive artists from the world with sheer disgust. But perhaps this isn't, as one thinks, the wickedness of men, but the holy will of God. For unless the top is whipped it will not hum.

"But perhaps some will say he perished because he had no clear idea of the distinctions between things. When he had built the boat, what mattered to him the laughter of men? And when the maiden bent the bows of her beautiful eyebrows in love and anger upon him, what affair of his was the willow-switch? When he was running to meet the enemy, why should he concern himself with a bilberry-leaf floating on the stream? Men are always inclined to mix too many things together and brew a potion of them, which is the death of them.

"Or, rather, I don't know the real cause of his overthrow. Who can know it? One can't point to a cause as one can to an ink-spot on a piece of paper, and say, 'There it is!' Nor can one write a single sentence about a man and say, 'That's the idea that ruined him!' Man's life is much too complex and

manifold to be summed up by referring to one cause or one idea.

"Last year we opened the grave. We ought to have left him lying there. He lay there safe from all his disappointments, but our curiosity to know how men lived three thousand years ago was great, and we opened the vault.

"When we took his sword from his breast and held it in the sun again for the first time, it still had its old brightness. Nothing was left of the wood and leather of the stool. Only the two bronze bolts that had held the cross-legs together lay upon the stones. The *schwarz-sauer* pot of old Mother Gruhle was still there, in good preservation but empty. The dainty axe of the maiden was still pointing toward his ear."

The sun stood between the far-away hilltops like one of those round lanterns that children carry about the village on autumn evenings, singing as they go.

Heim Heiderieter had finished his story and stood up, saying, "Woe to the man, Jörn Uhl, who is only a hunter after bread, or money, or honor, and hasn't a single pursuit he loves, whereby, even if it be only over a narrow bridge, Mother Nature can come into his life with her gay wreaths and her songs. . . . It's time for me to be going home. You have listened well, and you, too, little chap," he said to Jörn's young son.

"Have you far to go?" said Lisbeth.

"It's a three hours' walk," said he, "through fen and sand, and then through the silent little villages of the Geest, and at last across a heath. There's plenty to look at and think over on the way — besides, I know that when I get home they'll be glad. . . . Good night, all three! remember me to Thiess Thiessen and Wieten. It has made me glad to see your eyes bright again, Jörn! And as for you, Lisbeth Junker, you've got a red ear; who has been pulling it?"

"Oh, that was father," said the boy.

Heim Heiderieter burst out laughing, nodding, and hugely enjoying Lisbeth's embarrassment. Then he went home.

They stood watching him as he went down-hill toward the fens. Suddenly Jörn Uhl started up as if out of a deep sleep, and said, "Just fancy that fellow! For four years he was at

the university and came back without passing his examination. He had come to loggerheads with science. Naturally Dame Science is a sober and respectable lady. A Master of Arts he may be, but they are breadless arts."

"It's a fine thing, though, to be able to tell stories like that, Jürgen. You might have read seven scientific books about our forefathers and seven more about the human soul, and you wouldn't have learnt so much or got so much delight as you have out of the vivid little picture that he has just painted for us."

"Oh," said Jörn Uhl, "he's a monster. He saw us when we were sitting under the beeches, and then he invented this story. Such a—" He turned around, went to the grave and looked in, then looked back at Lisbeth. "What did he say? Knuckle-bones? What put knuckle-bones into the man's head? Just tell me that, now. And how long was it his beard grew? His flaxen beard! How cock-sure he was about it! And the beard kept on growing longer and longer. I believe it was seven yards long. And he said he could prove it, didn't he? And that it was just as true as geological strata and plant seeds and botany! Just think of the effrontery of him."

"But you listened attentively enough, after all."

"That I confess. It seemed as if God had let one have a peep into His workshop, and one had to put on one's Sunday coat in order not to look shabby in such a place."

He turned around and looked down toward the moor where Heim Heiderieter could still be seen in the distance. "To think of such a man!" he said, angrily. "He stuffs one full with his lies, and one actually feels thankful to him for doing so. Let him prove what he has said. I say, let him prove it!" he cried.

Lisbeth laughed, and said, "Well, well! Jürgen, your anger is delicious. But, come, what are we going to do to-morrow?"

"To-morrow? We'll all be together, that's all."

"I shall not be able to be with you," said the little boy. "I have to go away to Meldorf with Thiess to-morrow on the turf-wagon."

"Well, then, I suppose we'll have to do without you, my son," said Jörn. "What do you think, Lisbeth? Don't you think we might drive over and see my old comrade to-morrow? We can spend a few hours cosily together in the cart, and I'm sure you'll like him."

CHAPTER XXVI.

SHE was in the best of spirits as she sat next him in the cart with the two bays pulling away lustily. In these last years Jörn Uhl had been wont to sit crouched forward in his cart, and gaze straight in front of him at the horses and the road. But to-day he sat up straight, and his glance was blithe as he peered into the billowy light of that early autumn morning, in whose eyes were still wisps of the night mist; and now and again he would turn his head suddenly toward her and ask, "Are you enjoying it, Lisbeth?" And when he saw her beaming eyes he would nod with responsive pleasure, and then look straight before him at the road once more, or anon glance away over the fields. She, however, kept peeping at him out of the corner of her eyes, but as soon as she noticed any sign of his turning toward her, she would be gazing away into the airy distance, as though bent on deciphering wonderful things she saw in the flying mists. It was the old story repeating itself once more, the man attacking in front and the woman on the flank. So everything was as it should be.

They were both very much alike; both had the same close-featured, straight, Frisian faces, as though Nature, the great artist-mother, had made specially serious attempt to create something strong and beautiful with the very simplest means. Their hair was flaxen — his quite smooth, hers with more gleam in it, and tipped with little curls all around the edge. His face was oval and strong, with thin firm lips, a long straight nose, and eyes very clear and gray that were always on the watch like sentinels — a typical Frisian, Saxon farmer, who has to win his way out of penury and worry, a man who never laughs long and loud and heartily, but in short outbursts, in the corners of whose eyes, too, roguishness crouches and hides like children playing hide-and-seek and throwing shining balls to each other with suppressed laughter. She,

quiet and reserved, making him look up to her all his life long. It was like a farmer who woos an earl's daughter, and each time receives each look and word of tenderness, that ever and anon shyly breaks forth, with new surprise.

Three times they stopped on the way, and each time it was Lisbeth's fault.

The first time was when they were driving through a wood of young beeches; she saw something flitting backward and forward over the dry leaves, and laid her hand on his arm and made him pull up. It turned out to be certain slim-legged birds with black plumage and yellow bills that were darting hither and thither in search of their morning meal.

"They're blackbirds," he said; "cute and wily little customers that books call 'Turdus Merula.'"

"Why, Jörn, you know everything."

"Well, as to the parts around here, I like to think I know a thing or two; but as to what other countries are like or what sort of creatures live in them, I haven't the faintest idea," he said, proudly.

The second time he pulled up it was that she might enjoy the glimpse of a wide valley to the left. He pointed out different landmarks, and named them to her with the ceremonious self-importance of a native who loves every spot in the country around. He spoke, too, as a farmer and connoisseur, who knows the value of every acre of ground far and wide, and the name of every village, and the place of every boundary-stone in the deep moor; and beyond the moor the names of the villages which must lie over there. "Look, Lisbeth, where I'm pointing with the whip." She thought to herself, "Yes, but what's that to do with me?" but did not interrupt him. She listened with half an ear, thinking "How fine it is to sit up here! I wonder whether he'll speak out to-day, and how in the world will he go about it! Oh, the dear old fellow!" And as, half-turned from her, he was pointing with his whip to the foggy land over toward Schenefeld, she pressed her face shyly against the folds of his cloak. It was the cloak that Lieutenant Hax had given him on the battlefield. Lena Tarn had carefully covered the gold buttons with black cloth.

The third time they stopped, at Lisbeth's request, at "The Red Cock," and gave the horse a feed in front of the windows

of the inn. The sun had scattered the mists, and the air was now clear and warm, and they sat outside in the sunlight on the big white seat. The landlord's wife set two glasses of fresh milk before them, and went to and fro talking with them, although she did not know them, about the harvest and the weather. Jörn Uhl asked and answered questions. Lisbeth, who was sitting by his side, was looking dreamily across the road at the bushes on the embankment, where birds were darting about, and in her reverie was painting little faint pictures of the near and far future, and then rubbing them out and painting in new ones; then in a fright she would come back to the present, the mother of all futures, and hear the man's voice beside her, and smile to herself and go off again painting.

Jörn Uhl talked away and felt himself in a splendid humor. To be sure he would have liked to sit a little more comfortably and stretch his feet out, but she sat there as prim and neat as a silk kerchief that has just been taken out of the drawer.

When the landlady went back into the house, he again asked Lisbeth whether she had enjoyed the drive, and she again assured him that she had never had such a day in her whole life. "You can surely see that for yourself, Jörn." And she looked at him with a look that brought such a strange feeling around his heart, and he said, "I daren't for the life of me go near those eyes of yours. I grow quite dizzy, as if I were going to fall into them, they're so deep;" and he struck his big flat hand on the table, and said, "Let me hear you talk some more, Rain-tweet!" Then she threw her head back and laughed, and struck him on the hand with her glove, and laid her hand by the side of his, and said "Such hands!"

Then they heard the voice of the good-humored landlady through the open window, asking, "You can't have been married very long, surely?"

"No," said Jörn, "I've been wooing her for seven years, but never had the courage. Yesterday at last I got her."

She shook her head protestingly, hiding her face in her hands, and laughing, "Oh, Jörn, Jörn, what are you saying!"

"One really doesn't need to have studied book-learning to see she's but a fresh-made wife. She threw you such a glance just now. That's not the way one looks at one's husband after one's lived with him a few years."

Jörn brought his hand down heavily on the table for the

second time, and said, "What! did she really look at me like that?" He took her hand from her face and said, "Do it again, Lisbeth!" But she slapped his hand and tore herself away and looked straight across the road and saw a little bird flying, and thought to herself, "If I could only fly away for a little while, 'twould be no bad thing."

At this moment, in the nick of time, as it were, the landlady's little son came running home from school, a fair-haired boy of ten, and sought a place where he could sit down with his book. Lisbeth, noticing this, pushed the milk glasses over toward Jörn Uhl, with a motion as if to say, "That's all for you!" And without looking up, she invited the boy to sit near her, asking him what sort of a book he had there.

"It's out of the library," he said. "It's about fairy-stories. I'm reading them straight through, and I'm right up to here."

She looked into the book that the boy held out toward her, saw the title of it, and said, "Read this one out aloud to me."

"This one?" asked the boy.

"No, this one about 'Knowing Jack.' This man here likes stories when they're good and true."

So the boy read the story of "Knowing Jack."

"Jack's mother said to him, 'Where are ye goin'?' Jack answered, 'To Jill's.' 'Keep your wits about you, Jack!' 'All right. Now I'm off, mother.'

"Jack comes to Jill. 'How d'ee do, Jill?'

"'How d'ee do, Jack? Brought anything for me?' 'Haven't brought nothin'. Want somethin' for myself.' Jill gives him a knife. 'Now I'm off, Jill.' 'Good-by, Jack.'

"Jack takes the knife, sticks it in his hat, and goes home. 'Evenin', mother.' 'Evenin', Jack. Where've ye been?'

"'Been at Jill's.' 'What did ye take her?' 'Take her? Didn't take her nothin'. Got somethin' from her. Got a knife.' 'Where's the knife?' 'Stuck it in my hat.' 'That's stupid, Jack. Ye should have put it in your pocket.' 'No matter, mother. Better next time.'

"'Where are ye goin', Jack?' 'To Jill, mother.' 'Keep your wits about you, Jack!' 'All right, mother. Now I'm off, mother.' 'Good-by, Jack.'

"Jack comes to Jill. 'How d'ee do, Jill?' 'How d'ee do, Jack? Brought anything for me?' 'Haven't brought nothin'.

Want somethin' for myself.' Jill gives Jack a young goat. 'Now I'm off, Jill.' 'Good-by, Jack.'

"Jack takes the goat, binds its legs together, and puts it in his pocket. When he comes home, 'Evenin', Jack. Where've ye been?' 'Been at Jill's.' 'What did ye take her?' 'Take her? Didn't take her nothin'. Got somethin' from her, a goat.' 'Where've ye put the goat, Jack?' 'In my pocket.' 'That's stupid, Jack. Ye should have taken a rope and tied it up in the stable.' 'No matter. Better next time.'

"'Where are ye goin', Jack?' 'To Jill's, mother.' 'Keep your wits about you, Jack.' 'All right, mother. Now I'm off.' 'Good-by, Jack.'

"Jack comes to Jill. 'Good day, Jill.' 'Day, Jack. Brought anything for me?' 'Haven't brought nothin'. Want somethin' for myself.' Then Jill said, 'Take me with you!'

"Jack takes a rope and ties Jill up in the stable, and goes to his mother. 'Evenin', Jack, where've ye been?' 'Been at Jill's.' 'Take her anything?' 'Didn't take her nothin'.' 'What did she give ye, then?' 'Didn't give me nothin'. Came herself.' 'Where've ye got her, then?' 'Tied up in the stable.' 'That's stupid, Jack. You ought to have stroked her.' 'No matter. Better next time.'

"Then Jack goes to the stable, takes the currycomb, and strokes her with it. Then Jill gets angry, breaks loose, and runs away.

"And so she became Jack's bride."

"My word!" said the boy, "if he wasn't a simpleton."

"Splendid!" said Lisbeth. "See if it doesn't say in the book where Jack came from. Wasn't he from Wentorf?"

Then, for the third time, Jörn smote the table. "If that's not plain speaking, my name's not Jörn Uhl."

"Well," she said, "now it's time for us to be off."

The sun was already pretty high as they drove along on the left of the hills, and soon they saw, beneath the linden-trees and tall old apple-trees, a silent little village. And when they stopped in front of the first broad courtyard, in the hope that some one might come out and tell them where Jörn's comrade lived, the man himself appeared in the doorway, taller and good deal broader than when he used to buckle the white leather strap around his hips at Rendsburg.

"Here's the man you're looking for," he cried. "Why,

Jörn, old man, who's that you've got sitting next you? Isn't that? . . . Why, man alive, it's Lisbeth Junker, isn't it? I haven't seen her for many a day."

"Eh?" said Jörn, "you know each other?"

"Yes, we've seen each other several times, but it's now seven or eight years ago."

Lisbeth Junker nodded somewhat haughtily, so that Jörn thought it could not be a very pleasant remembrance for her, and determined not to ask any further questions.

"Lisbeth and I are neighbors' children," said Jörn. "And now she's come over to Thiess Thiessen's on a visit. I suppose you know that I've given up the Uhl?"

"Yes, I've heard all about that, comrade, and about you being at Thiess Thiessen's. Good for you that you've got him to go to, Jörn. Glad to see you so jolly, too. Is that your doing, Miss Junker?"

Lisbeth looked down from the cart at him, and said, "You called me by my Christian name last time we met, so let's have no make-believe, and do it again to-day. Now, help me down from the cart."

He gave a good laugh, like a man who is relieved of some uncertainty and embarrassment, and feels himself standing on firm ground once more. "You haven't changed a scrap," said he. "Come, jump, lass!" He loosened the leather straps and lifted her down. "A barrel of good, heavy oats," he said. "A good ten-stoner, I should say."

Jörn stood on the other side of the cart, nimbly loosening the traces, and said, "We just wanted to see whether we could get on together, so we've come for á bit of a drive."

"So that's it, is it?" said his friend. Then he added, impatiently, "Now, just tell me straight out, are you already engaged or are you only thinking of it?"

"Can't a man have a drive with an old schoolmate without people saying they must be engaged? Engaged! Gad, she gave me such a lecture just now at the Red Cock that my ears tingled! I'll be glad when I've got her back home again," he said, with angry eyes.

But as she was going past the horses' heads, on her way to the house, he turned around so as to make her pass close by him, and as she passed he saw the look she darted at him; her eyes were just beaming.

Then he saw that things stood well with him, and went on unharnessing the horses, whistling the while.

"It does one's heart good to see you in such high spirits," said his friend, "and to hear a word from your lips without dragging it out of you. Do you remember? The story went about afterward that at Gravelotte, on the 18th, as long as we were under fire you hadn't uttered a word except 'Pity to lose such a fine horse!'"

Jörn turned sharply toward him. "And I'm sorry to this very day, when I think of it," he said. "It was a good, hard-working beast, and a mare into the bargain."

And there and then he began to speak of the years long past. He was excited by this meeting with his old comrade, and spoke out of his gladness of heart, seeking to hit on the old tone of familiarity, but without immediately finding it. Just as his body and soul had both grown stiff and clumsy in those long, silent years of heavy toil, all that he said had got a touch of affectation and exaggeration, like the first leaps that March lambs make in the meadows. He related with many gestures, and with great frankness, that he had now neither house nor land, and not a care in the world, and that it seemed to him as though the lassie inside, Lisbeth Junker, was really a bit partial to him, a thing he would never have thought possible. But he hadn't the slightest idea, as yet, he said, what he was going to turn his hand to.

The stable-boy came and took the horses, and looked curiously at the big, somewhat round-shouldered man, who had been telling about such weighty things in his presence. His comrade laid his hand on Jörn Uhl's shoulder, and said, "Now, come inside," and followed him in, smiling.

His mother, a stoutish woman, with a kindly face and dark hair, just turning gray, looked at her two guests in a good-natured, motherly way, and began speaking of one thing and another. She spoke of Jörn's father's long illness, and how nice it was for him to have Thiess Thiessen to fall back on. "And you're not so lonesome, neither, Jörn; for you had but to go a few steps abroad to lay your hands on a bonnie maid to bear you company." Talking in this way, she gradually forced both her guests into the room, and looked at her son as though to say: "What is one to think of them? How do they stand toward each other?" For, according to

the rustic code in those parts, everything must be straightforward and plain, or the contrary — pure or impure — white or black — betrothed or not betrothed. That was something that Jörn Uhl had not properly taken into account.

"Well, mother," said her rogue of a son, "I don't know exactly how matters stand between them; only they're not yet engaged. Nor do I know whose fault it is they aren't; but I think everything'll come out all right. At any rate, they've come here, thinking you could help them; for the whole countryside knows what efforts you are making to provide your own son with a wife, and you've a name as a match-maker."

Then she shook her fist at him, and scolded him for always blabbing out everything one told him, bidding him hold his impudent tongue. But he only laughed and said: "I say, mother, do you know what? You take this Lisbeth Junker into the kitchen with you, and talk things over, and I'll go and show Jörn Uhl the stables."

So he took Jörn Uhl by the arm and went out with him. And outside, when they had gone through the house and the barn, he said to him: "I say, Jörn, how does it come about that you're jaunting through the country alone with this lass? Just tell me how affairs stand between you." And he pointed over his left shoulder, with his thumb turned in the direction of the kitchen, and winked his eye.

"Just so," said Jörn, "that's the point. How do affairs stand between us? Perhaps you know? For I don't. I've been mighty fond of her ever since I was a child; but up to the present day I've always had too much respect for her: and that's the long and the short of it. All of us looked up to her so, all except Fiete Cray — you remember him, don't you, that fellow of the 86th we met at Gravelotte. But he'd be hail-fellow-well-met with the emperor himself, would Fiete Cray. . . . I never thought that it would come to it."

"Come to what, old dreamy head?"

"Why, man, what shall I say? . . . I mean, come to her taking me for her husband! . . . All my born days I'd have to take mighty good care of my looks, and go about every day spick and span in my Sunday best." He heaved a great breath. "Eh! man!" he said, "but isn't she a bonnie creature! And so grand in her ways, too! I tell you I wouldn't

risk putting a hand on her for the world. And a bit cold she is, too, I should think."

His comrade laughed. "What! that girl cold! She'll blush as crimson as any of 'em, mark my words. She has only hidden and barricaded herself behind those highty-tighty reserved airs of hers. That's often the way with 'em. Just wait till you've stormed the fortress, you'll find those cold breastworks turned into a ring of fire. That's my opinion."

"How can you speak in such a cock-sure way?"

"H'm!" said the rogue, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes," said Jörn, looking somewhat more comforted. "That's true. It is just grand how kind she is toward me. It's a miracle, I say. It's splendid."

But next moment he became skeptical again. "I can't believe it," he said. "You see, she was always the bonniest thing I could think of in the whole world — mountains high, I tell you, above me. Her clothes, her hands, and her hair. Do you mean to tell me that's ordinary hair? And then, above all, the way she has with her. Do you know, I've always had the feeling, from the time I was quite a little fellow, that she was like a wonderful castle on a high rock, and I used to think and think, as I looked up at it, of what beautiful things must be hidden away in it, and the look of the great rooms from inside. And now, man, she's been leading me by the hand from hall to hall of it since the day before yesterday, and you haven't the faintest idea how splendid it all is, how lofty, pure, and beautiful, enough to make you hold your breath with delight. And then look at me. What am I? I've got nothing; can do nothing; am nothing. You know how everybody gossips about me, and says what an odd fish I am. Only a few days ago in the village street I heard one child say to another, 'Look, that's the man that can read the stars and tell when any one's going to die, and when there's going to be a war.' I've always been difficult to get on with, as you know. And what hands I have! Just look at them. So big and so empty. What does a princess want to marry a farmer's boy for?"

"Well, you *are* a duffer! Just put out your hand and you've got her."

"Do you really think so?"

"I know the varmints," said his comrade, airily.

"She's no varmint. What are you talking about?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "She's not so different from the rest of 'em. Maybe she's a bit livelier because she's a bit cleverer."

Leaving this theme, they began to talk about horses, and Jörn's friend had two four-year-olds led out, and grew excited when he saw that Jörn Uhl would not praise them as unreservedly as he wished.

"Take them in again," he cried to the boy. "I don't want to look at them again."

"Just tell me," said Jörn, "where did you get to know her?"

Then his friend lifted his eyebrows, and, still sore at Jörn's faint praise of his horses, said, "Ask her. Perhaps she'll tell you, perhaps she won't."

"Tell me yourself. It's absurd of you to make a secret of it."

Then the other laughed, and went to the kitchen door, and shouted into the room, "Hey, Lisbeth! Here's Jörn Uhl wants to know where I got to know you. Shall I tell him or not?"

Lisbeth Junker, who was standing near the fireside, tossed her head and said, "Tell what you like!"

"Be off out of this," his mother cried, pretending to seize the tongs.

So he returned to Jörn. "Well," said he, "if you really must know, it happened like this. Six or seven years ago, soon after the war, I was in town with the cart. It must have been the middle of summer. And as I was driving home in the dusk, who should I meet at the end of the village but Lisbeth Junker. I'd seen her sometimes on my way to the Grammar School when she was going to the Cliff School. So I pulled up and asked her how she was. You know we had the French campaign behind us, and were a bit proud and bold toward everybody, including girls. I had a chat with her, and was mighty pleased to see how trustfully she looked up at me with her dear little fair face. She told me she was waiting for old Dieck's cart. He had promised to take her with him to Wentorf.

"'Oh,' said I, 'you'll have the deuce of a while to wait. Do you know what? Just jump up by me and I'll drive around by St. Mariendonn. I don't mind going a bit out of my way if you're by my side.' For I thought to myself, 'Egad, you've

driven often enough alone, you may as well make yourself cosy for once.'

"She took pretty long thinking the matter over, and wouldn't accept at once. She looked up at me a bit doubtfully, but I did my best to persuade her.

"First I was offended, then I was humble. I joked at her, and teased her, and grew angry by turns, but I believe she was only half-listening as she gazed at me attentively. Suddenly, when I was just trying to think of a new dodge, she said, 'Make room for me,' and there she was sitting beside me, and I drew a long breath and thought to myself, 'Good. We've got so far.' I tried to puzzle out what would be my best move next, and I thought to myself what a nice, smart little piece of work it would have to be if I was to succeed, for she was well known among all of us as a girl who kept men at arm's length.

"So I went on chatting as well as I could, talking about things that I thought would please her. That was the first time that Gravelotte stood me in good stead. But when she made any remark, I agreed with her, and backed her up right and left. She was in good spirits, and I saw that I had made a favorable impression. But I wasn't at all sure of my ground and couldn't find a way of introducing the subjects I wanted to talk about, however much I might puzzle my brains. I was afraid she would get a dreadful fright and think ill of me, and be offended with me as long as I lived. And I should have been sorry for that, for she was a fine and bonnie lass that one couldn't help respecting as soon as one set eyes on her pure, beautiful face. But that's the way with us. That's the sort of girl that seems worth the trouble of winning.

"Well, we had almost reached Wentorf. You know, there where the road turns off to Gudendorf, and it had grown quite dark. So I thought to myself I'd better make a start if it wasn't to be labor in vain. So I began very warily, my heart beating like a sledge-hammer. 'I say, Lisbeth Junker,' said I, 'you're driving with me now, aren't you?'

"'Yes,' says she, laughing.

"'Well, you see, when any one else gets a lift in my cart, he says, "Come and let's drop in at the So and So Inn and have a glass of something at my expense." Well, we can't do that, can we? No, you'd be talked about, and, besides,

I doubt whether there are lights in the place. Now think it out for yourself, what you can give me, for it would be a painful thought for you afterward to think that you'd had a drive with me and given me nothing for it. Look you, you're driving with me once for all, so that can't be altered.'

"'Well,' she said, laughing, 'tell me straight out what you want.' Then I risked it and said, 'Well, if you promise not to take it amiss, little lass, I'd like a kiss, and, if possible, a few more. For Heaven's sake, though, don't be afraid. Sit still where you are; you needn't jump out. If you're not willing, I'll leave you as unmolested as my old grandame when I drive her to church of a Sunday. Only don't be offended.'

"That's about the drift of what I said.

"For awhile she sat there without saying a word, as though she were thinking what to do, and I heard her soft breathing and was beginning to repent of what I'd said, and to think of sounding the retreat, when she said slowly and in a low voice: 'I well know that you men often brag about it afterward when a girl gives way to you. I'll let you kiss me because you're such a kind, nice fellow. But you must solemnly promise me that you'll never tell any one.' I tell you, Jörn, it pretty well took my breath away. I had to give her my hand and say the words after her, and I believe after doing so I would have sat there a good while stiff and awkward beside her, if she hadn't put her hands up to her face, whether to weep or to laugh I hadn't the faintest idea. So I just took her pink little face between my hands, with a fond word, and, Jörn, . . . she was as sweet as could be. We kissed and chatted to our heart's content. The horses munched the grass along the roadside, and the cart stood right across the track, but we didn't bother ourselves one jot about it. At Ringelshörn she got down. 'Lisbeth,' I said, when she was standing on the heath near the cart, 'I liked it tremendously. Be a good little lass and tell me what evening next week I can come to Wentorf and wait for you down by the willows in the school-garden.' But she only shook her head, and said, 'I ought to thank you for having been a dear good lad to me, but I'd advise you to keep away from the school-garden. I'm too good for any mere sweethearting, and I haven't the slightest intention of marrying you, for I love some one else, a man I'll never get.' I called her a little witch and other pretty names, and had to make

the best of it. She went away down the hill slope toward the Goldsoot. Since then I have only seen her once at the railway station. She came up and spoke to me as if I were her own brother. I can tell you I am glad to this very day when I think of that adventure. I never went to the school-garden, for in those days I had no idea of marrying."

So said Jörn's comrade, throwing a roguish inquisitive glance first toward Jörn, and then toward the kitchen.

Meanwhile Lisbeth Junker was sitting on the turf-box near the fireplace, and the woman with the shining, dark gray hair was saying, "Now, tell me straight out! What is between you? Of Jörn Uhl I've heard all sorts of things. He's a bit odd in his ways, and likes peering at the stars and thinking about things that a farmer's got no business with. He's stiff and awkward, too, and unpractical and gruff; to put it short, a Grammar School farmer. But one thing I'll tell you, he's a son any mother might be proud to own. Oh, yes, what I say is true enough, so you needn't open your eyes so wide. That stupid boy of mine often tells me if Jörn was my son how delighted I'd be. Well, to come to the point, are you engaged to him?"

Lisbeth looked up from her seat on the peat-box and discovered that she had no reason to hide the cause of her emotion. For eight years her heart had been full of Jörn Uhl, but since the day before yesterday it had been overflowing. So, like a little child that gives its hand to strangers, at first shyly, with frightened eyes, and hesitatingly, but afterward grows confiding and frank, Lisbeth Junker began to speak about her mother, the schoolmaster's unhappy daughter, and about her own girlhood at the house of her kindly old grandparents, and about her playmate Jörn Uhl and his strange ways, and she couldn't get any further than Jörn Uhl, Jörn Uhl, Jörn Uhl. . . . Nothing but Jörn Uhl. "I have always loved him, but at first he was too thin and too stupid for my taste. Afterward I would have been dreadfully in love with him, but then he married some one else. Oh, what I went through in those days! Then she died, and I could have loved him ever so much, but then came all that misery with his father and brothers, seven long years of it. He didn't have a single thought left for me. And now . . . it looks almost as if . . .

Why! Do you know, yesterday he played marbles with me, and he's thirty-one and I'm twenty-six!"

The goodwife at the fireside clasped her hands on her breast. "Child, child," she said, "what a wonderful story! In my whole life I've only read a single tale called 'The Hangman's Daughter and Her Earrings,' but what you've been telling me might be out of a book. But who knows what'll come of it all? When I married I was eighteen and he was twenty-five. I was sensible and he wasn't. He was just as wild as that boy of his out there. So I had to be extra grave and serious. So I've grown to what I am now, a bit too sharp and scolding. By nature I was soft-hearted enough."

"If I only knew," said Lisbeth, "whether he'll have me or not. He has neither farm nor money, but I'd have him to-morrow just as he is, even if I had to live with him at the Haze, yes, even if I had to dig turf with him, I'd be ever so happy. But he won't do that. He'll go away somewhere or other and start some new enterprise, and who knows what may come between us then?" she said, despondingly, gazing into the fire with streaming eyes.

"Nonsense!" said the other, with an impatient gesture, "don't you worry yourself now, but just take care and make him settle the matter to-day. Then it will be all right."

Lisbeth covered her face with her hands to hide the crimson that streamed over it, at once terrified and delighted at the thought. "He won't do it yet," she said, doubtingly, "because he doesn't know what his plans for the future may be. But so much is certain, at least, — he won't marry any one else."

The women talked on in this strain till all the inmates of the house, together with the guests, were seated around the heavily-laden farmer's board, the head servant-girl at her mistress's side, the son opposite, and beside him the farm-hand and then the remaining servants.

"You've done my boy a lot of good," said the goodwife, "as long as you were soldiers together, first in peace, then in war. He was a bit of a good-for-nothing, I'm afraid."

"Yes," said Jörn, "he was, but one of the sort one likes."

"That's the worst of it," said she. "One can't be angry with him, at least, not for long. If one wants to vent one's anger on him, one must do it at once, or else it's impossible. Believe

me, I'm sick of getting out of temper with him. I wish he'd choose a good wife for himself and be done with it."

"Mother," said he, "only yesterday you told me I'd grown more sensible and steadier this last year."

"Yes, that's true enough, Jörn. That he is. This last year he's been a bit better, but he'll never come to any good till he marries."

"I don't want to marry," said the rogue. "Do you know what, mother? You get married yourself. You're not too old yet. Then you'll have some one in the house to help you."

Then she stretched across the table with the wooden spoon she had in her hand, and, in spite of his effort to avoid it, gave him a sharp rap on his curly head, so that the bowl of the spoon snapped off short.

"I'll teach you to make fun of your mother. Gretchen, bring another spoon."

The servants laughed a little, but appeared to be familiar with such occurrences.

"He's been to three different schools, and to two different pastors," she scolded, "but he's come back home the same as he went away, without seriousness and without interest in anything. I thought he'd have been better after he came home from the war. But the first thing he did on the station when he came back was to pick me up in his arms and carry me through all that crowd of people to the cart. Since that day I've broken many a spoon over him. I don't know what'll be the end of it, I'm sure. He neither drinks nor gambles, nor does he idle away his time, but he'll never take things seriously."

"She takes everything I do and say the wrong way."

She looked at him and shook her head. "His father was just the same," she said. "What I had to put up with in that man. I couldn't take a step in the house without being teased and kissed and pulled about. He was always interrupting my work with some silly trick or other. You couldn't get a serious word out of him. He turned everything to ridicule. In the early years of our marriage I often used to think to myself: 'If this goes on for thirty years, I'll never be old, but on the other hand I'll never get a moment's peace.' But later on, when we'd been married some ten years or so, he altered, just as if he'd turned over a new page in his life. No one would have believed it possible. He took an interest in dealing

and bartering, put a lot of capital into peat-digging, and started a tile-factory, which he again sold later on. He was oftener on the roads, too, than I liked, and was a great deal too much wrapped up with his work and with money-getting to please me. And if I interfered with him, he would say he had no time, with a 'Go away, child, I've other things to think about just now!' About me he troubled himself but little. The most he did was to stroke my head once or twice when he came home, saying, 'What smooth, glossy hair you have, mother! And you keep the whole farm just as neat as your hair.' Strangers sometimes said to me, 'What a good-tempered, jolly husband you've got!' They spoke of a man unknown to me. I had once had such a husband, perhaps, but now it was as good as none at all that I had. It runs in the family. That sort of man never reaches years of discretion before he's thirty. I believe it will be the same with my son there."

Lisbeth Junker bent over the table and looked at the young man with eyes half-sympathetic, half-mischievous. "Can you trace any signs of discretion budding in you yet?" she asked.

"As for discretion, just you look to your own, lassie," he said. "It's not so many years ago that it was in as bad a plight as mine."

She reddened and tossed her head and then gave a short laugh, but refrained from looking Jörn's way.

After dinner he took the two of them with him and led them through the fields, showing them the lands which belonged to the farm. Here he pointed out a field of his, there a meadow, and in between these explanations he told them of merry pranks the soldiers played during his campaigning days, and about a fine trip he had had once upon a time to Hamburg and Berlin, and teased Lisbeth. When Jörn Uhl wanted to hear a word about the farming of this or that field, he laughed, and put the question aside, saying, "Oh, nonsense! That's mother's business."

At last when they had gone a good distance from the village, and Lisbeth would have liked to turn back, he urged them to go a little farther, to a hilltop that lay a little aside from the path. When they had reached it, he pointed out to them that this great field stretched as far as the river Au, whose

bright waters lay broad and still before them, and was his property.

"It's not worth much," said Jörn Uhl.

"Not worth much?" said his comrade. "You mean no good for grazing and ploughing?" He stamped his heel into the light earth. "But just look what's under it. Just dig down five feet, what is there then, eh?"

"Well?" said Jörn Uhl. "What then?"

"Clay, my lad, a mighty stratum of the finest clay."

"Clay?"

"Clay, man!" cried his comrade, "and from clay you make pottery and cement."

"You don't say so!"

"Well, do you see, Jörn? Do you see, Lisbeth Junker? Just wait two years more and you'll see clay-fields opened here. Down to Lowrie's. Wire rope . . . eh? Then in barges down the Au, and if they won't give me enough for it in Legerdorf, I'll build a cement factory for myself!"

"Well," said Jörn, "go in and win." Then he glanced at the gray, sandy earth, and from it to the Au below them.

"You see, it's like this. I understand nothing about the cement-making business, therefore I must either engage a technical man or must go to Hanover to some place or other myself, and learn it."

Lisbeth laughed. "See," she said, mockingly, "why, you're getting a bit of discretion already." But Jörn Uhl seemed quite absorbed in his own thoughts. His eyes were fixed on the ground, and he said not a word more.

When they were back home, Lisbeth went through the garden with the housewife, but Jörn went to his friend's room, where the latter had managed to fish out a couple of books he had recently purchased, one on mineralogy, the other a special theory about the working of clay-pits. He struck his hand on the table and said, wrathfully, "What a shame it is that I was so lazy at school! There I stand, now, perfectly helpless, like the ox before the barn door." He pitched the book over to Jörn, saying, "Of course, you can understand it all, though nobody troubled himself a jot about your education. You have helped yourself on further than I, and you understand ten times as much as I do, who have had five

hundred pounds wasted on me. Open the book at page 350. Can you understand it?"

Jörn understood it and explained it all to his comrade. He also took the other book and was able to teach him out of it, too. His comrade forgot his anger and cheered up, saying, "Why! old chap, you must come again next week and let us have some more talk about it."

Jörn Uhl nodded, and asked about the regulations of a certain technical school, and how long one would have to study there in order to get a certificate. At last he sat quite silent, with compressed lips. It was a strange sight to see his great, brown, horny fist lying upon that new, grand-looking book. The book looked so small beneath it, like a mere plaything.

Jörn and Lisbeth started so as to be well on the way toward home before dusk. The housewife took Jörn aside and told him how pleased she was with Lisbeth, and talked to him in a motherly fashion, saying that he should trust in the future and no longer put off his betrothal. He would be sure to be able to earn his living somewhere or other, and she hoped he would soon come to see them again. Her son had been so sensible to-day, she said. In the kitchen he had stood with the tongs in his hand and asked her to help Jörn Uhl with a little money. So let Jörn come when he would, a few thousand marks would always be at his disposal, for whatever he wanted to buy or whatever business he wanted to start with them.

Jörn Uhl tried to thank her, but he could not. His eyes were bright as he nodded to her, and he shook the thrifty housewife's hand for a long time as they said good-by, and she knew by the way he pressed it what he wanted to say.

The sun was low on the horizon when they reached the highroad once more.

"Well," said Lisbeth, "now we're quite alone again. It has been a delightful day, and the drive home is delightful, too. . . . What do you say to the good lady?"

"What do you say to her son?"

"Oh, him? . . . What was that his mother was saying to you just before we started?"

"Tush! Some old wife's gossip, you may be sure."

"Won't you tell me what it was?"

"No, not to-day. To-morrow, perhaps." He began to ponder, and they drove on in silence.

After they had sat thus a good while he noticed her peculiar demeanor, like that of a person in a mood of self-defence or refusal. He looked up and saw her face full of pride. "Come," he said, "what is the matter, Lisbeth? Out with it, Raintweet! Just tell me what the little lass is thinking about."

"Do you think I didn't see out of the kitchen window what that nice comrade of yours was telling you of his experiences, with *such* gestures, too, and now you're angry. And I must say I wouldn't have thought it of you, Jörn."

He laughed. "You are on the wrong track entirely, Lisbeth, for I was glad about it. Does one get angry, think you, with a man whom one meets on the way and asks, 'How far is it to so-and-so? I hear it's seven miles.' And who answers, 'No, it's only a few steps further.' I'm glad, I tell you. For now I know you're not a mere prude."

"Oh, you and your prudery! He came driving by and was kind and good to me, and he looked so clean and frank, and so he kissed me."

"He is a lout!" said Jörn Uhl. "I tell you, he's a lout, to kiss a girl who can't defend herself."

"Defend myself? I didn't try to! It happened just as I wanted it."

"It was a piece of downright blackguardism. That you must admit. What, *you!* The proudest girl in all the land! Alone with that fellow for hours on the highroad!"

"It was about the time, Jörn, when you got married to Lena Tarn."

He was silent. After a little while he caught her hand and held it tight and said, "Dear old Lisbeth, I didn't know anything about all that."

Speaking with difficulty and with tears in her voice, she said, "You were like 'Knowing Jack' in the story, Jörn."

"You just see, Lisbeth. If you really and truly have enough courage, you'll be married, too, before long. You just see!"

"There's one thing: I'll never marry a man who bores me."

Jörn Uhl laughed, and turned toward her, saying, "Shall I let the horses graze a little by the roadside, like that fellow did years ago on the Meldorf Road?"

She shook her head and looked at him through eyes shining with tears. "It won't do, Jörn. It's still broad daylight."

"Is that all?"

She again shook her head. "Not here, Jürgen. It's not for us two to act like that. I'm thinking of Lena Tarn and her child." She laid her hand firmly in his.

He nodded and said, "It's a miracle. A downright miracle. The finest girl in all the land, and Jörn Uhl, together. No man has ever gone storming into the sun with such giant strides as I, in these three days. Look, Lisbeth, we are driving straight into the sun! Oh, if I only knew what to lay my hand to!"

He grew silent again, and she let him have his way. But when they turned into the soft sand road, and it grew dark, she shifted a little on the seat as though she were not comfortable. So he put the whip into the socket and put his arm around her and drew her close to his side, looking shyly into her face. "Do you like sitting like this?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, and snuggled closer to his shoulder. "Now I'll go to sleep." But she thought to herself, "Just catch me going to sleep! I'll take precious good care not to sleep away an hour like this."

Jörn Uhl sat still and stiff as a post and watched the trotting horses and thought on his future and hers, fancying in his honest way that she was asleep. But she, leaning against him, looked with great, clear, motionless eyes toward one single point.

When they pulled up at the big door of Haze Farm, he said, "Now go away to bed, Lisbeth. You're tired. To-morrow we'll talk the matter over."

She remained standing near him, as though she had still something to say to him. Then he stroked her cheek and said, "Don't be downhearted, Lisbeth, everything will come right in time." Then she went away without saying a word.

After he had attended to the horses, he went into the sitting-room, still deep in thought. "I know now what the cause of the trouble has been all these years. It's been something wrong in me myself. . . . I have always hated all make-believe and hypocrisy; in my father and brothers and in many another man I've seen what harm self-deception does when a man in his thought and action leaves what is real and true.

And I have seen how widespread the evil is, and from the time I was eighteen up till now, I have always said to myself in my pride, 'That's a fault, Jörn Uhl, that you're free from.' But in these three days it has become clear to me, and I see now that I myself have lived in self-deception and lies, and got on the wrong track entirely. Yes, I, Jörn Uhl, haven't looked myself and my affairs straight in the face; I have never known myself. I have clung to the Uhl, which didn't belong to me, and thereby have continued the lie the same as my father and brothers did, and so I have shared their misfortunes. I have worked and worked like a horse at a coal-winch, and yet have always been over head and ears in worry. I thought that my life's task was to save the Uhl. The Uhl? And what is the Uhl, I'd like to know. What is the Uhl compared with my own soul? And compared with Lena Tarn's soul? And what though a man should gain the whole world and hurt his soul! Who is there that would heal the hurt for him? My soul has grown hard within me, and Lena Tarn's dead and old Wieten's hair is white as snow. I began at the top, away up there at the proud Uhl, and since then I've sunk and sunk. If I had stayed here at the Haze, or had settled down on some other little Geest farm, or had taken in hand some modest work, with my *own* strength, then Lena Tarn would have been well looked after, and Wieten would not have been so old and white, and I would have been able to sing as I did when I was a boy, and these fits of passion would not have come over me. And then we'd have had some real ground to stand on, and would have worked up to something respectable. To begin modestly, that's the chief thing. To begin from the lowest rung of the ladder. And that's what I am going to do now, as true as God helps me. I'll begin with playing marbles, and will be a child like the Boatman and my comrade over there."

He lit a candle and went to the chest which stood in one corner, and began hunting out one thing after another till the floor around him was covered with books, maps, glasses, and telescopes. He pulled up a chair, opened first one book and then another, and settled down to it as industrious schoolboys do, holding the book before him like a ten-year-old lad learning his lesson by heart. Then he laughed to himself and let the book sink. "Faith, it's an odd sort of student you'll

be!" he said. "It's a student who will handle a drawing-pencil like a spade, and make the compasses swing around as if he'd got hold of a plough-handle. He'll gulp down science like a thirsty soldier does cool water on a hot day, and he'll open his eyes wide like a hunter lurking around a fox's den in the twilight. Is it really possible, though? All these things that were my stolen pleasure, yes, my downright *stolen* pleasure, from the time I was a child, shall I now be allowed to love them openly and honestly, like a trusted lover? I say, is it possible? Shall I be able to look into books in broad daylight without people saying, 'Just look at him! That's the cracked bookworm farmer.'"

With frowning eyes he stared into the dusk of the room. "If my father had been an earnest man," he said, "and had sat with us of an evening, he would have seen what my inclinations were, even in those early days. I would have been saved a weary way and much distress and suffering, and would have turned out a good-natured man with sunshine in my heart and eyes. But now I will always have a brooding mind and a brittle temper. And yet . . . I'll not be faint-hearted. I have learned familiarity with the terrible in life long ago, listening to Wieten's stories and then by Lena's death-bed, and in long and fearful times of loneliness. I came close up to the place where there is nothingness, and came close to God. What more can be in store for me? A man must just begin at the beginning and believe in what is good, both in God and in himself, that's the whole matter. So I'll venture it. And if I can't make use of what I learn because I am too old, or because I die first, then I suppose God will have roads to build up there in heaven, and shafts and ditches and canals to dig in worlds still incomplete, and will give me some post as master of a shaft or keeper of a lock. I'll throw out my lines as far as the very stars, and sharpen my spade for a piece of contract work on the Milky Way. I'll venture it as though I were but sixteen.

"Yes, faith, I'll do it, I will. And if I do it, it will be as the most beautiful and proudest woman . . . Tush! what are all the women in the world to me? . . . My own lass, my proud, bonnie lass, will stand behind my chair and will look on me with glowing, tender eyes, and on my book, and will wait till I have done with it. And when I have done with

it she'll laugh aloud with glee and speak of our marriage. And here, close by the Haze forest, we shall be married. Faith! I'll do it. It's worth the doing. And now I'll go straight away and ask her whether she'll agree to the plan."

And then, just as he was, in his shirt-sleeves, without a thought, wholly absorbed in his great plan for the future, he went out of his room, straight across the big hall, and into the little chamber where Lisbeth Junker was lying, and saw her bed in the light of the clear autumn night not far from the window. He grew a little nervous, in spite of himself, as he stepped lightly toward her. She did not stir, but looked at him with big, astonished eyes. "Is it you, Jürgen? Come here." She reached for his hand, made room a little, and drew him down to her on the edge of the bed. "What is it you've come about?"

He sat down a little stiffly, and slowly unfolded his plan to her, and was at times a little embarrassed and again eloquent, and would make a great sweep with his hand.

"And now the question is this," he said, "whether you will really have me, and whether you will wait two years for me."

She said, "Come closer to me and I'll tell you." And as he obediently bent down to her, she threw her arms around him and fondled and kissed him, pouring out a flood of words of endearment. "You strange old Jörn Uhl! You bookworm farmer, you! It's all the same to me. Oh, you 'clever Jack!' All I want to know is that you love me. Come closer, Jörn. Kiss me. Please kiss me. Oh, I'm so haughty and cold, am I not? You see how haughty I am."

Jörn Uhl was simply dumb with astonishment. Stupid Jörn Uhl! He sat on the edge of the bed and stroked her cheeks and her hair, and looked into her beautiful ardent face, and said, stammeringly, "Just . . . fancy . . . you loving . . . me. I . . . I will wash my hands seven times a day and, Lisbeth . . . you must tell me how I'm to behave and what I must do. For I go about everything the wrong way.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHAT need is there for us to go much further with Jörn Uhl's story? Have we not gone through his life as a man goes alone into some still and homely little village church, looking at everything and treading lightly and cautiously, and then seating himself at last awhile in silence opposite the altar? For what more does Jörn Uhl want to make him a man?

What can beautiful Hanover City and its high schools alter more in his nature and character? It will show him how one may press his way politely through streets thronged with men, and how to build locks and railways and set up cement-works. But his inner character, the core of the man, can no longer be changed or modified. And that is as it should be. For what more should one desire of a man than that he should humbly reverence the great mystery of human existence and the universe, and trust in and enjoy everything that is good?

There stands Jörn Uhl on the platform of the great railway station, taking leave of ten or twelve fellow students, and one of them, a German-American, whom his father, a tanner in Buffalo, has sent oversea, delivers the farewell address. With the one hand he holds his cloak close, for it is cold, foggy, November weather, and chill draughts are passing through the great hall. The other hand is stretched out toward the man who is leaving them.

"Jürgen Uhl, Provost of Wentorf, in this moment the picture of you comes back to me, of how you looked that morning when you first entered our drawing-class. Your back was bent like a coal-heaver's, your hands were horny, and your eyes hungry. You came up to us frankly and gave us, one after the other, that horny hand of yours, and told us briefly who you were, whence you came, and what was your object in coming. And from that hour forth we were all fond of you. We took you into our midst and protected you, for we saw that

you were in danger of coming into collision with certain people. We found you a room and bought white shirts and collars for you; we persuaded you to send your heavy top-boots back to the Haze, and we dragged you away from your books when you had taken a dogged grip of them and got your teeth into them as a weasel does with a fork-handle.

"But while we were busying ourselves protecting you — just fancy *us* protecting *you* — we soon saw what was in you, and that you were a true descendant of those farmer-folk who studied the sea and land and stars for themselves, and built dikes that held firm, and ships that could buffet the North Sea, and who kept their lips compressed till they grew to be ever so thin, and who built themselves up a philosophy of curiosity and awe for the world's secrets, a philosophy that any serious man can get along with. While we were still bent on *protecting* you, Jürgen Uhl, and giving you a little town polish, there we found ourselves, somehow or other, sitting at your feet and learning from you and obeying you. You were ten years older than us in understanding, and twenty years in seriousness and experience. But in spite of that you treated us as equals, and you had kindly eyes for our stupidity, and many a piece of foolishness you put a stop to. You gave an ear to what we had to tell of our experiences, and with a shrewd word often broadened and enriched them. In short, you are our Provost, Jürgen Uhl, and our King."

Thereupon the youngest of the band pressed to the front. He was a clergyman's son, from South Germany.

"I say, Dick," he said, "what rubbish you're talking. You ought to know that Jürgen can't stand such soft soap!"

"Just a moment, boys," said Jörn Uhl, looking at his comrades of the drawing-school, one after the other. "You know that I have had a long spell of loneliness and distress in my life. By nature and through hard times I have grown into a slow-going fellow who has to haul every word and every gesture with rattling chains and buckets out of a deep well. Even when I was at home there were kindly folk who would come up to me and encourage me. You've read some of Fiete Cray's letters, and Thiess Thiessen's name isn't unknown to you, and I've told you of Heim Heiderieter, and as for the girl I'm going to marry, why, you've drunk her health much oftener than was good for you. The encouragement, then, that these

folk gave me you have continued, a thing that was necessary enough for me. If you had made merry at my expense, and wondered at me, and held aloof from me, then I should have been utterly lonely here, for I would never have offered you my hand a second time. But you were kind and open with me, and, boys, I heartily thank you for it."

The train was standing ready, and Jörn Uhl got in. The youngest of the party, the clergyman's son, carried his trunk in for him, and pressed up to him, and said, "Mother writes to me to give you her kind regards."

This clergyman's son had failed to pass the final school examination which is prescribed in Germany for those who wish to enter a university, and for a year it had been doubtful whether there would be one more good-for-nothing clergyman's son drifting about the world or not. In the parsonage, away on the banks of the Main, there had been some bitter scenes between father and son, and even between husband and wife. The mother had said, "In our house there's too much praying and too much outward holiness. That isn't the thing for a healthy boy; and now, together with the outward garment that he has taken a dislike to, he's going to throw away what is good and everlasting, Love and Loyalty." And the father had said, "Maybe you're right, wife. We preachers easily run into the danger you speak of. Religion is a beautiful and delicate thing, and revenges itself on the man who adopts it as a profession. But if those were your opinions, you should have told me so before. Instead of that you have kept giving him, behind my back, of the money you made with your poultry-yard, and he's spent it at the fat publican's, that good-for-nothing parasite on respectable honest folk." Then he had been sent to the drawing-school, and had fallen into the hands of the long-faced Frisian farmer, who was butting his head into science with the same dogged perseverance as a steer butts the boards of its stall; and gradually a clear idea of the nature of life began to glimmer up through his muddled brain. Jörn Uhl had been able to send a good letter to the lad's father, whereupon an answer had come from his mother — an answer salted with tears. He has still got a touch of restlessness in his blood. He will be working a few years later under Jörn Uhl in Holstein. Then he will go abroad into the world. Of course! He must needs convince himself,

forsooth, that the earth is round, but after all he will leave Germany as one who does it credit.

Hence the "kind regards."

Now the train is off. Gusts of wind push against the windows, shining rain-drops trickle down the panes. In the gray mists, away behind the gliding smoke, are seen the dim forms of farms and villages, and forests and heaths. It is the sort of weather when it does not seem worth while either to make plans about life, or to expend any sort of mental energy on it. For there seems no prospect that the rain will ever cease or the sun ever shine again.

But Jörn Uhl and this wind and rain are old acquaintances. This is the same wind and the same rain that used to fly over the fields of the Uhl while he plodded along up one furrow and down another behind his plough. He knows you must plough and plough even in gloomy weather, and one must make up one's mind to wait, for the sun will come back of itself. So there he sits with his hands on his knees, watching the gliding drops and the travelling banks of fog, and thinking now of his boyhood at Wentorf, now of Fiete Cray, anon of the tanner at Buffalo, anon of Wieten Penn, who is sitting at home at the Haze, white-haired and bent with age, and then anon of his comrade's clay-pits. There he will now find work and bread. And then his thoughts go to Lisbeth Junker and his boy, who has been living with her for the last two years, eating at her table and sleeping near her bed. But as he thinks on all this, a shadow rises, and his thoughts are with his sister Elsbe.

In Hamburg he hurried through half the town. Often he had to ask the way. At last he came to a part of the town that was known to him, and there he fell in with a troop of wandering school-children. And there was the shop-window of the old aunt, and written above it, "All Sorts of School Stationery, Sold by Ellen Walter." He pondered awhile. So many thoughts were rushing through his head. But seeing some of the little chaps pushing in with great eagerness, he went with them.

She stood behind the counter, putting the boxes away without looking up, and was saying, in her refined and dainty way, with that dear, sweet, high voice of hers, "Just a moment, please."

"Oh, certainly," he said; "please serve these gentlemen first."

Then she let the box fall and held out her hand to him over the counter and blushed, and was full of wonder and astonishment, and said, "Your little boy will be out of school directly, Jörn. . . . What is it you want, Tommy? Two penn'orth of nibs? Blotting-paper? Here, you can pay to-morrow. An exercise-book with lines? Don't make so many blots. Little ones, I have no time to-day — I have a distinguished visitor. Look, this great big man used to play with me when he was just your size. . . . So, Jürgen, now we're alone. My aunt is having her midday nap. Put your trunk down here. . . . You must be hungry. You . . . Jörn . . . Don't, Jörn! . . . Don't make such a noise. . . . Jörn! . . . Oh, what nonsense you talk!"

"Now your hair's coming down."

"And . . . Oh, Jörn, Elsbe has written, Jörn! Elsbe has written a letter to the Haze. She's coming over from America. Thiess is here already. He's got his old room again, and is down at the wharves for every boat that comes in from New York. Let me go, Jörn. . . . I hear a step I know. Do you see? There's our little laddie."

"Father! My word, what a fright I nearly got! Is that really you?"

"Yes, it's me," said Jörn Uhl; and he knelt down and stroked his child's fair hair and looked into his bright eyes.

"But, I say, father, what do you think of me going to school! Lisbeth just simply carried me there, and there I was! . . . Are you going to stay with us?"

"Yes, always."

"What a yellow beard you've got, father! It looks just like the rye-crops down by Ringelshörn. Do you remember, father? . . . Are we going to the Uhl or to Thiess's, now? Lisbeth says we're going to Thiess's."

"The Uhl no longer belongs to us, laddie. We are going to the Haze first. Lisbeth, you tell him . . . I don't know how to set about it."

Then Lisbeth Junker, too, knelt before the little lad and said, with smiling mouth, "Now, listen, Prince. . . . Shall I tell you something? I should like very much to go to the Haze along with you and father, but I'll tell you something.

I will only go with you on one condition. I don't like you calling me Lisbeth. I would rather have you call me 'mother.' . . . And your father. . . . He will have to call me 'dear wife.' Do you both agree to that? Else I won't go with you."

Then the roguish glance he had inherited from Lena Tarn came into the little boy's eyes as he looked at his father. "What do you say to it, father? Shall we? . . . Well, come here, then!"

And he threw his arms around his mother's neck.

Fifty smutty, dirty coal-heavers observed the scene and told their wives about it when they got home. They had just left the steamers and were going along Quay Street to dinner. Each one had his drinking-mug at his side and each one was in a hurry, when suddenly, coming from the coal-yard quay, where, as everybody knows, the turf-boats from Burg and Kuden are wharfed, they saw coming toward them a little man who had been a familiar figure to most of them for years past in the streets about the harbor. He was carrying a little turf-sack on his back, and was stooped forward, and his face was long and brown, and his eyes were quick and blinking. Like swallows flying between the trees in a garden his eyes flew about, searching among the crowds of passers-by. Suddenly he saw somebody.

Paying no heed to what people might think, he let his sack of turf slip to the ground, and shouted in a loud and querulous voice, "Fiete! Dear old Fiete! Fiete Cray! Hullo there! . . . That man there! With the gray waterproof!"

There was a stir in the street. People stood still and joked and laughed. Many wanted to help him.

"Hullo, there, Fiete! Fiete Cray, turn around, man! Go and carry the old fellow's sack for him."

Then the man who wore the gray waterproof turned around and was astonished to see all the laughing faces turned in his direction. "Have you chaps lost your senses or have I?"

"This way, Fiete — open your eyes. The old fellow there with the bag of turf."

The words "bag of turf" fell like a lasso over Fiete Cray's soul and took it captive. His eyes wandered over the crowd and caught sight of the little man, who with one hand was

holding fast the bag that two street urchins were tugging at, and with the other he was making clutches and beckoning toward him as though he were vainly trying to catch hold of him. The old Haze farmer could not utter a word. Fiete Cray ran up to him. He, too, paid no heed to what folk might think. None whatever. He stroked the trembling old man's face and picked up his hat, which was lying on the road, and put it on for him. "Oh, you good old Thiess! what a piece of luck you saw me! Can't get along any further, eh? It's gone to your knees, has it? Come, Thiess, sit down on the sack for a bit." Then he turned around to the thronging bystanders. "Gentlemen," he said, using a word he had picked up in America, "this is Thiess Thiessen, turf-farmer, from over yonder behind the Haze, and at the present moment he looks like a crooked old dried turf-sod himself. But my name's Fiete Cray, as you all know. When I was a youngster I had business dealings with Thiess Thiessen, and I and my dogs would often drive up with our load of brushes and heather-brooms in front of his house, and out of these visits sprang a friendship which, as you see, hasn't grown rusty with time, although in the meanwhile I've been fifteen years on the other side of the water. If these facts are enough for you he and I have nothing against your now taking yourselves off to your midday repast. . . . Are you a bit better, Thiess? No? Not yet? Well, let's sit here awhile. . . . We are not taking up any collection to-day, friends. Just stand quietly where you are and have a good look at us."

He seated himself on the other end of the turf-sack and the crowd dispersed.

"Fiete, have you brought her with you?"

"I've been a great fool, Thiess."

"Tell me about it, laddie."

"I saw her on board my steamer. I saw her quite unexpectedly. She was travelling steerage — she wouldn't go second-class."

"Is she alone?"

"She has a little girl with her, a little mite of six or so — just as little and dark and thin and shy as herself."

"Oh, deary me! And where have you got her?"

Then Fiete Cray struck the turf-sack with his fist and said, "As we were landing, my eyes were everywhere. Everywhere,

I tell you! That's the cursed way with us Crays, and so I lost sight of her. She crept away somewhere — "

Thiess Thiessen sprang up. He got over the difficulty with his knee somehow or other. He stood straight up.

" We'll go and look for her, Fiete, the whole night — the whole night. We'll go to all the inns and to the police-station. We'll ask for a little maid with a little child."

Fiete Cray slung the sack across his shoulder, and said, in a hopeless voice, " It'll be a difficult thing to find her here. She promised she would go to the Haze with me. That's what we must hope for."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

JÖRN and Lisbeth were walking along the edge of the forest. They had been into town looking at a house and buying furniture. They were going to be quietly married at the Haze on the day following Christmas Day, and then go back to the town the same evening.

She clung so close to him that at the sturdy pace they were going her dress flew to one side and caught his knee now and again.

"I was nearly over, that time," he said. "The snow is smooth enough to bring one down." He made her walk more slowly.

She laughed.

"Jörn," she said, pressing close to his side again, "I'm so happy."

"That's natural," he said.

"How do you mean, natural?"

"Well," he said, giving her a roguish look, "it will soon be Christmas Eve. Doesn't every child feel happy at the thought of the Christmas tree?"

"Oh, Jörn," she said, shaking his arm, "do you think we'll really be happy with each other, and for always?"

"Not a doubt of it," he said. "You see both of us know who it is we are marrying, and that neither of us is a saint. And each of us intends to let the other follow his own bent and go his own way. That's why so many marriages turn out failures, because the one wants to compel the other to think and act exactly in the same way as himself. I, on the contrary, think that each should try and bring out the other's characteristics, — of course, within the limits of common sense, — so that each may have a full, rounded individuality in his helpmate. What nonsense people talk about man and wife being like the oak and the ivy, cup and saucer, and such

like! No! Let them stand side by side, like a couple of good trees of the same stock, only that the husband has to take the windward side. That's all."

"How well you put it, Jörn!"

"I've tested it with Lena Tarn. She went her way and I went mine, and we got on first-rate."

In silence they both thought of Lena Tarn who was dead.

"At that time she seemed to have been created on purpose for me," said Jörn, thoughtfully. "She was young and fresh, and of dauntless energy. She was no great scholar — she had not the slightest love of books. She didn't even read the newspaper. She used to laugh and say, 'I got my reading over when I was at school.' About the same time as one sheds one's first teeth she was a droll, delightful creature. Whenever I remember her and her ways, I can't help thinking of Wieten's fairy-stories. She had, as it were, grown up out of the earth like a beautiful, strong young tree, that has learned how to converse with sunshine and winds without the aid of teachers and schoolmasters."

"What was she like in other ways — I mean, as a wife?"

"Oh! . . . You mean . . . Well, just like a child of Nature. There came times when she cried aloud for love, and others when she just despised that kind of thing."

She clasped his arm with her fingers, and said with downcast eyes: "I feel sad at times, Jörn, that you always talk so sensibly to me. Once, two years ago, that time we were visiting your comrade's farm, you were different, Jörn. Do you really love me as much as you did Lena Tarn?"

He put his arm around her and drew her to him so that she stood close to his breast and couldn't move, and looked into her eyes with such a glance that she hid her face on his shoulder. "Go home, Lisbeth," he said, "or else you'll be catching cold. I am going to take a run up into the village."

"You're going to see if Elsbe's there. Oh, Jörn, if she were only to come! I'm coming with you."

When they reached the top of the hill whence one can see far down the road that leads to Hamburg, by way of Itzehoe into the loneliness of the Haze, there stood Fiete Cray, gazing into the distance. But they found no one else there, and went home.

Of an evening they would sit together in a rather depressed mood, and not have much to say to one another. Wieten would knit away at a pair of child's socks, and every evening would place a pair of soft, warm, felt slippers behind the big porcelain stove. Thiess, too, would regularly hang the large brass bed-warmer on the hook near the door. No one ever asked for whom these things were being kept in readiness. Wieten had grown even more silent in these last years.

When Thiess said to her, "You ought to read a little, Wieten," she used to answer, "I've gone through such a great deal, and seen so much of life, why should I read, then, or want to listen to what people say?" And when Thiess asked her to tell them some of her stories, she would say, "Such things all lead to nothing. After all, we human beings can change nothing." She sat there thinking. She would sit and think awhile, and then raise her head toward the window, and then go out into the dark. Those inside heard her light, slow steps in the hard, new-fallen snow, and they knew that she was going her usual round, and peering out as far as the starlight would allow her, to see whether the child were yet coming. But no one said a word, and no one looked up when she came in again and sat down wearily near the big stove.

Soon afterward they would all go to rest. Thiess and Jörn went into the room they shared together. "It's all over with my sleepy fits," the old man would say to Jörn. "By the time I had reached the sixties they were things of the past, and now sleeplessness is beginning. Lie down, Jörn, laddie, I'll walk up and down awhile."

Thiess Thiessen suffered more and more from this sleeplessness with increasing years, so much so that it was impossible for him to lie still. When he was seventy he used to wander up and down between the bed and the window half the night long, halting awhile near the window at each turn and gazing out into the night. In these three weeks before Christmas this habit of night-wandering and standing at the window had had its beginning.

"Do you think she'll come, Jörn? If she doesn't come for Christmas, she'll never come at all."

"And if she does come, what then?"

After awhile Thiess said: "I'll not worry at all about that;

if she only comes. . . . Do you hear? The east wind's getting up. What if she were on the road now, the poor little soul!"

Jörn Uhl stood near the other window and answered: "In times gone by, when I was still very young, I thought there were only two kinds of things that could confront a man — things that can be bent, and those that can be broken. But afterward, in the sad years, I found out that there is a third kind — things that come and stand for a moment, or maybe for whole years, before one, like some great, wild, black monster raising its cruel paws with claws dead and white. What is one to do against it? Turn aside? Flatter? Lie? There's no sense in that. There it stands, right in front of you, and it is mad, Thiess, mad. It has no understanding. It's a cruel, wild being. It's no good attacking it, for it's much the stronger. Well, face to face with such a monster, with such an overpowering fate, what alternative is there? Only one. We must say to it, 'Whether you kill me or let me live, whether you devour me and those I love or not, whether you unsettle my understanding with your everlasting threats and the sight of your claws or not, be that as you choose;' but one thing I tell you, it all happens in the name of God in Whom I put my trust, and firmly believe that His cause — which is the good — will triumph, in me and everywhere. Do you see, Thiess? That's how I stand toward Elsbe's fate."

The old man went backwards and forwards, and went to the window and gazed out into the sky for a long time. "Jörn," he said, in a low voice, "do you really think that everything that so happens — all the sad things that you and I have lived through, all that Wieten Penn went through in her youth, and the horrible things they brought about there on the Uhl, and my sister's wretchedness — do you think that all that has a good purpose? I mean, do you think there's any sense in it?"

"Thiess," said Jörn, "if one doesn't believe that, where shall an earnest, thoughtful man get courage enough to go on living? See, one can clearly perceive that all created things are put under the ban of sorrow and distress. Throughout all creation there's a restless something surging up and down, that puts one in mind of simmering water. But yet one can see that there's sense in all this bubble and toil and trouble.

The evil only sinks after a great struggle, and the good wrestles and strives laboriously to get to the top. Some mysterious force is constantly in action, pushing and shoving and trying to create order like the shepherd and his dogs amongst the flock. And happy the man who hears the gentle call of the shepherd away through the storm and lends God a helping hand in His laborious task."

"Hark!" said Thiess, "what's that? Did you hear it?"

"It's the frost crackling amongst the branches of the ash."

They waited and waited, and she did not come. Yet all of them had the feeling that she was coming, and on the road. Her hungry soul had stretched out its arms toward home, in longing for those who were so dear to her. Her spirit was passing through all the old paths at the Haze and its presence was felt by those who were waiting for her there. Thiess Thiessen went up secretly into the corn-loft and stood there a long time in the bitter cold, gazing through the windows far away toward the southeast. In the night old Wieten started up crying, "She's standing in the snow and hasn't the strength to go further!" Jörn Uhl was lost in thought, and started as if in fright when Lisbeth spoke to him. Fiete Cray was again away on the roads, asking everywhere along the highway if any one had seen a young woman, slight and pale looking, with thick dark hair, and with a little girl at her side. But he came back, his mission unaccomplished.

Thus it came to pass that they had to keep a cheerless Christmas. . . . Put out the love-light in thine eyes, Lisbeth Junker! Stretch not thine hand toward thy beautiful bride, Jörn Uhl. Thiess Thiessen and Fiete Cray, ye lovers of gossip and genial talk, be on your guard lest your tongues grow canty!

There came a cold mist, and with an idle wind it drew thin gray shrouds over all the land. The sun stood like a dull whitish spot that looked about the bigness of a house, far away in the sky. And as it drew by, the mist left parts of its loose tissue hanging on every tree and every hedge that it passed. There lay the whole land covered with hoarfrost.

Stiller and stiller everything grew. The many thousand voices, Life and rain and all the cries and sounds that usually fill the air of this solitude, held their peace. The birds clustered

noiselessly together near the houses, the rooks flew mute to their shelter for the night, so afraid and full of presentiment did all Nature feel. Folk that generally paid no heed to the unceasing stir and whisper of the woods and skies and fields were now amazed at the silence that had come over everything. When two people met on the road they stood still, looked at each other, made no move, then lifted their fingers and whispered, "Listen!"

The fir-trees on the forest borders stood straight and slim, clad in silver brocade from head to foot like brides ready for the wedding, and behind them in drooping veils of white stood waiting the great procession of bridesmaids. And this fairy spell filled them half with the feeling of its beauty and half with a shuddering fear. Each of them gazed at its neighbors with eyes full of wonder till the dim light of day faded and waned. But when it was evening the whole of their eerie glory changed. They beheld each other wrapped in funeral shrouds, shrouds all cold and stiff, and trimmed with a wealth of fine, white lace. . . . Shuddering fear held sway over all things. . . . There lay the village all glittering and new, like a Christmas-box that had been laid in this soft white valley, like a pretty toy in its case of cotton wool. And it was as though giants came out of the woods from away by the sea and squatted on the hills around about, and began to play with the white houses and the fair white trees, and mixed the houses up together, and pushed the people hither and thither, and brought them together in couples, and then set children by their side and made them grow old, and brought them to the churchyard, and dug a little hole in the wide white snow. And these games of the giants had lasted thousands of years without the folk in the village noticing.

Yes, but people no longer believe such things because they have no longer eyes to see them. And they have no longer eyes to see them, because they no longer believe them. But wondrous things have not been done away with in the world merely because men shut their eyes and say they see nothing, or because they open their eyes very wide and declare they see everything.

Wonderful things happened that Christmas night, when there was a danger that the haggard wife of that proud Harro Heinsen, — who at this moment was leaning drunk against a

house-wall away in some street or other in Chicago, — a danger that this wife of his, I say, might after all miss her way home; for she had made up her mind never to see Haze Farm and those who lived in it again. She had gone about seeking a shelter away up there in Schleswig, and had encountered a last disappointment. It wore out what was left of her spirit. She wandered off southwards with her child, and crossed the Eider at Friedrichstadt. Traversing endless bare highways, she passed, with her child's hand clasped in hers, through snowed-in villages, not with the aim of reaching home, but driven and pushed and in a dream. The image of Haze Farm and the people who dwelt in it flitted ceaselessly before her half-closed eyes, and she had perforce to follow it.

Dusk came on, and the evening mists in heavy, loose masses crept over the land, with unseen hands building up the miracle of the white, dead world. Here and there stars shot up as in anger, piercing the mist, and a cold bluish light spread over the fields.

"How much further is it, mother?"

"Not much further, my child."

"Can't we sit down here? My feet are hurting me so."

"No, we mustn't. Do you see the light yonder? That's where we're going."

"Do kind people live there?"

"Yes, they're kind people. . . . I cannot, I cannot go to them. Oh, where shall I go to with my child?"

Then a man came by and, as he passed, said, "Where are you going to, little woman?"

"I . . . I am going a long way."

He came up closer to her. "Oh," he said, "you're the daughter of Greta Thiessen. You're Jörn Uhl's sister. They'll be glad enough you've come, lass. They've been looking for you everywhere."

She said nothing, but thought to herself, "I'll be able to get away from him," and so went along with him.

"Now, come," said the man, "here's a short-cut. You know the way past the Odel Krug, don't you? You must have come that way often enough when you were little."

She walked painfully and slowly along beside him.

"The child is tired," he said. "Come here, little one. That's it. Don't be afraid. I'll carry you. Hi! Won't Jörn Uhl be

glad, and Thiess will lose his slippers thrice to-night. And the others! Why, it's Christmas itself I'm bringing home to them."

He kept on carrying the child in spite of the way it made him pant. At the cross-road he put her down, saying, "It's hardly a quarter of an hour's walk now. Seest thou, lass? They have a light burning in the doorway and in both the rooms for thee."

He left her and went toward the village. She had not recognized him, nor did she ever see him again, although she lives at the Haze to this day. But she has never forgotten him.

The evening was come. Children had come over from the village to Haze Farm, as was their olden custom, and had beaten blown-up bladders with sticks and sung songs to the monotonous noise, and got presents of nuts and apples and cakes; and thrice did Thiess Thiessen go up the ladder into the loft and cut a piece from the bacon that hung beneath the sloping roof.

And Lisbeth Junker sent the others out and lit the Christmas tree that Fiete Cray had brought from the woods, and thought sadly to herself, "It's only for little Jürgen's sake. We grown-up people will be thinking of Elsbe and sha'n't be able to take much pleasure in anything."

But when she had laid the new school-books for little Jürgen beneath the Christmas tree, and had hidden his picture-book and his first pair of skates under them, she cheered up a little, and then a little more, and brought the shirts she had made for Jörn.

"This pipe is for Thiess, and the two-and-sixpenny Atlas into the bargain. What else could one give Thiess Thiessen?"

"I've only one great wish, Lisbeth," said Thiess, "and that is that Elsbe and her child might be standing beneath this Christmas tree to-night. Hist! . . . No, it's the wind."

"Now I'll call the names."

First of all came the little boy with his hand in that of his father. He was a grave and thoughtful lad, and remained quiet even when he saw the tree. He stood awhile in front of it, and it was easily seen that in his heart he was rejoicing. But he didn't show it except by his sly glance at Lisbeth Junker when he stepped up to her and stood at her side. He looked at the books and asked, "I say, who are they for?"

Then he busied himself in looking through his possessions, and the lights played over his fair hair.

Thiess and Wieten had never before seen a Christmas tree in their life, and had no clear idea of what it meant. Fiete Cray began walking up and down the room and humming to himself, a habit that loneliness had taught him. Jörn Uhl stood and stared at the tree, and the lights that were to have shown the beautiful face of his betrothed showed him nothing but the darkness of this hour. Mute and helpless they stood there, feeling, "We can't keep Christmas. Put out the lights on the Christmas tree, Lisbeth; the light hurts us."

In that silent and painful moment, when two beautiful proud eyes were brimming full of tears, they suddenly heard a noise outside, as if two or three people were moving about under the window. A thrill of terror ran through them, and they stood as if fixed to the spot. Their hearts beat violently, trembling in a great fear between hope and terror at the supernatural. Jörn Uhl with a great effort rushed to the door and went out. He strode across the great middle room and dashed open the door.

Out there in the snow he saw what he had hoped. His voice hardly obeyed him, as he said, "Is it you, Elsbe? Is it you?"

"Oh! Jörn. . . . Is that you, Jörn? This is the way I've come back."

"Come inside, child. Come in. That's it. . . . Let me take the little one. That's the way. . . . Now, come."

"Me, Jörn? . . . Jörn, what do I want here? . . ."

"Come, Elsbe, I say. Now do! . . . Lisbeth, come here a moment. She's tired."

Thiess stood in the doorway and kept saying, "My little Whitey!" stretching his hand out toward her, but unable to move from the spot.

"Oh, Thiess, Thiess! How often I've told you you do everything topsyturvy! . . . Oh, my God! . . . Wieten, your hair is white."

"Here, let her sit in this chair, Lisbeth! Wieten, where are the slippers?"

She sat in the warm chair near the big stove weeping, and Wieten knelt before her and pulled off her wet shoes. Lisbeth undid her jacket that was all encrusted with hoarfrost,

and Jörn tried to take off the child's cloak and couldn't, while Fiete Cray took hold of Thiess Thiessen, and said, "Here's a chair for you, Thiess. Sit down."

The child was blinking at the Christmas tree. "Are we going to stay here, mother?"

"The poor child!" said Thiess, "the poor child!" He sprang up and got a plateful of cakes and filled the little one's hands.

Jörn looked from the child to his sister. She lifted her head and looked at him, and suddenly the vision of the whole misery of his youth and of hers flashed before him. He clenched his hands and cried with a wild gesture, "Curse my father for this!"

Then Lisbeth jumped up and ran toward him, weeping and crying, "Oh, Jörn, do not forget me!"

"Leave me, leave me, Lisbeth!" he cried. "When I think of how my mother's life was ruined, and all the peaceful happy days made sordid and filled with misery by the treatment she got, I . . ."

She fondled and coaxed and kissed him, and begged him to rejoice that his sister was back home again. "She thinks that you are angry with her!"

"What?" he cried. "I? I angry with her?" And he ran up to her, this broad-shouldered, austere man, and knelt before the broken figure of his little sister, stroking her hand and calling her all the pet names that he thought he had long forgotten, and saying, "My father is to blame, and I am to blame. . . . Am I not, Wieten? . . . Thiess, you tell me. Am I not to blame, too?" Then he spoke great things about the future. "You shall live like a princess here at the Haze, and no one shall touch or harm you, and old Wieten will always be by you, and Thiess will talk to you until, at least, you'll have to laugh again."

She let it pass over her unheeded. She had laid her hand upon her brother's hair and wept herself quiet. Gradually her breath became heavy and deep, and her weeping more subdued and wearier. She sank down like a traveller who has put his heavy burden on the earth beside him, and sits down awhile on some stone by the wayside.

Then Wieten and Lisbeth went out to prepare the beds. At last the woman who had returned home and her child lay

under the roof of the Haze in deep and heavy sleep. Jörn Uhl stood at the window with Lisbeth Junker.

"There you've had a proof of it," said he. "A part of my soul has grown hard and turned to ice."

And she repeated, "Don't look away over my head, Jörn. Come quite close and look straight at me. You must be able to see that I can help you, and will help you, as far as in me lies!"

He looked down at her without a word, and as he looked upon her and she held up her face with clear eyes toward him, it seemed to him as if he were looking into some wide valley in which, between the green of the meadows and the gloom of beautiful trees, lay deep and tranquil lakes. His heart grew lighter within him. He said, "I must always come to you, Lisbeth, when I get these gloomy fits, mustn't I, lass?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

YEARS came and went.

Jörn Uhl took over the management of his comrade's factory, and helped, besides, at the building of the great canal that goes right through Germany, and which we all are so proud of. He built locks, too, on the Stör and the Buhnen, and on the isles of Sylt and Röm, and in winter taught drawing and mathematics in a college for working men. So people came in time to look up to him as a man whose words and knowledge could be thoroughly relied on. The boy who, long years before in the school-sergeant's little room, had said, "It's all one, Thiess, whether I become Provost or not, as long as I learn something. And, mark you, I've made up my mind to learn," — this boy, I say, had had to begin twice over from the very first rung of the ladder. But life, after all, is long enough to make oneself into something, if one only has faith enough and a sturdy will.

But he didn't come through it all without a few scars.

As long as he lives, Jörn Uhl's character will show traces of rifts and flaws here and there. Although his wife knows his nature well, and although she is so blithe and strong, and so loving toward him, she has never been altogether able to smooth out these flaws, the remnants of evil days gone by.

It was some short time after the birth of her first child. Heim Heiderieter, who was among the guests, had made a somewhat indiscreet joke which set the room in a roar. As the spirits of the party became more and more boisterous, Jörn Uhl left the room. Dame Lisbeth missed him at once, and went seeking all through the house for him. She found him at last standing outside in the dark, and went to him and asked, "What are you standing out here alone for, Jörn? Why don't you come in and sit with the others?" At first she could get nothing out of him; gradually, however, he

admitted that all this merrymaking and laughter was intolerable to him: it brought too many old pictures up before his mind. But he promised to pull himself together again and go back into the room, and she wasn't to say anything about it. She put her arms around him; spoke affectionately, soothed and fondled him, and went inside again. By and by he followed her, and sat there at first taciturn and moody, listening with an attentive face to what was said. After awhile he lifted his glass and pledged one of the guests with half-embarrassed looks of kindness, and then he told a short story, and then he glanced over at his wife. Lisbeth's eyes were bright with tears as she nodded her pleasure and recognition. And now he found her helping him, he succeeded in being blithe and jovial along with the others.

It would often chance, too, that he would come back home from some journey or other downhearted, silent, and tired, as if he were half-frozen. And then when he heard the sound of children's pranks and laughter inside as he entered the house, he would turn as stiff as Lanky Sott of yore under the leak in the spout. Then they'd look at each other and run off to their mother in the kitchen, and after a swift, eager council of war, they would come back into the sitting-room, and keep very grave and quiet; after awhile one would come up with some sore spot to be kissed, and another for help of some sort, all of them treating him as thoughtfully as ever they could. Then the first one smiled; then the second would risk a smile, too. Then they'd make off to the kitchen, shouting: "I say, mother! father's thawing!"

Then he would shake his head at them, and smilingly threaten them, and brighten up, and the sky would be clear again.

Years came and went.

One day the spirit of unrest came over Heim Heiderieter, and he determined to visit the country around Ringelshörn and Wentorf. He arrived without mishap or adventure at the first houses of St. Mariendonn, on the edge of the heath, and saw a sailor-lad of the Imperial Navy standing there, dressed in a white duck suit, and stuffing the heather he had cut into a sack. His mother, a haggard and overworked little woman, was raking the remnants together.

"Where do *you* hail from, seaman?" asked Heim.

"Oh," said the sailor, "I've been out in the China Seas on a man-o'-war, and have just got four weeks' leave of absence."

Heim sat himself down awhile on the slope of the hill, and listened awhile to the sailor yarns. At last, when Heim thought of getting under weigh again, a thought struck him, and he asked, "What's your name, then?"

"Stoffer Cray," said the sailor.

Heim thought, "Well, now, if that's a good beginning!" and went on his way.

When he reached the first houses, he was in doubt as to which road he should choose, and whether he would find the Goldsoot if he kept along the Heide hills. Up to then he had never approached the Soot from this side of the country. So, at the first house he came to, he made inquiries from a man who was standing before the door trimming a post for a fence. The latter turned around and looked toward the brownish hills that rose away over beyond the village, and said: "That's a simple matter. You go down there past that farmhouse on the left. Then you come to that tree on the right; ye see it, eh? Why, then you strike the foot-track, and go along it to where it forks, straight across that field of rye. Then you go on straight ahead, and make a bee-line for that gray horse there that's browsing up there at the top in the heath. Do ye see? Then you go along the ridge, close to the edge, keeping well to the right, till you come across a big valley that slopes down to the marsh. In that valley you're pretty sure to find the Goldsoot."

Heim Heiderieter nodded, as though taking it all in, although all these directions were mere Dutch to him; and on taking leave of the man, he asked, "What's your name?"

"Stoffer Cray," said the man.

Heim gave a friendly nod, and went on, thinking, "Well, I'm blest! Now, I just wonder what's going to happen next." He managed to get through the upper village all right, without getting entangled in talk with anybody, and made a straight course for the gray horse that was standing up in the heath; but as he went he fell a-dreaming, after his usual fashion, and tramped along with his eyes fixed on the heath at his feet. When he awoke and looked up, lo! the gray horse was gone!

"Of course," said he; "there you are, now! Not a sign of

him. Strange thing that Nature seems to get out of gear as soon as I start to go anywhere. That was the gray steed of Woden." He trusted the good spirits and pressed forward to the heights. Standing still at times and looking around, and thinking all sort of things about the objects he saw, as was his wont, he found himself at last in the middle of young oak thickets, but had not the faintest notion of how he had got there. "The Goldsoot's not to be found, anyhow!" he said. "They've hidden it away somewhere. They don't want me to see it, and are on for a little fun at my expense." But he didn't lose heart over it, but went on whistling merrily and giving a laugh now and again. "You sha'n't spoil my good humor; I'm hanged if you shall," he said, and found it pleasant enough up there on the heights, stumbling through the heath and the oak thickets, with occasional glimpses out over the wide marsh. Now and again he turned around, for it seemed to him as though some one were calling out behind him. He thought, "Of course, that's some more of their mockery and pranks. I'll bet my life on it!"

And now he really did hear light, swift steps behind him, and suddenly turned around in terror. There stood a barefooted, yellow-haired lad who was saying, "I'm to tell Heim Heiderieter that he's on the wrong track. He has to go in this direction!" and he shot ahead and entered a narrow footpath that wound through the waist-high brushwood of young oaks. Heim walked behind in silence, wondering that the lad never ran into anything. Not a single branch was moved, not a single dry leaf was rustled as he passed. So the lad led him down a steep path into the little valley that sloped into the marsh. "Here is the Goldsoot," he said.

"Eh?" said Heim. "How do you know I'm looking for the Goldsoot?"

"My father sent me here," said the boy.

Heim looked at him distrustfully. There was something so fresh and frank in the lad, and yet something quite awkward and new, as though he had been a root a moment or so ago, and, just to meet an emergency, had for a time been changed into a human being. Heim hoped to catch him stumbling, and said, "What's your teacher's name?"

"Brodersen."

"Do you see?" said he. "That's not true. Hermann von

Rhein is his name, and he's an old schoolmate of mine. I'm not so stupid as other people think, my lad. Now just tell me straight out what you're after."

The boy laughed, and dipped his bare toes into the water of the Soot. Heim's eyes opened wide with expectation, and he thought to himself, "Now, he'll spring in and nothing more will be seen of him."

"Why, the teacher you mean, he's away to Brunsbüttel," he said, as he drew his foot out of the water and waited till the mirror was placid again. "Now I can see the frog," he said.

"What frog?" said Heim, and he knelt down on the edge.

"There's a gray frog in the Soot. See, there, on the bottom! He's sitting on the moss."

"So he is!" said Heim. "That's the first time in all my born days that I've seen a gray frog. Let's get him out!"

The boy laughed. "I think it's a dead one," he said, "and its color's faded."

"What?" said Heim, "a faded, dead frog? Well, if that doesn't beat everything!" He looked at the boy distrustfully, observing, "There are stupider boys than you in your school, I should say. Eh, youngster?"

"You're right there," said the boy.

Heim got up off his knees. "Just show me if you know the tables yet? Now, how much is once seven?"

The boy solved it.

"Hm!" said Heim. "You've managed to hit it. . . . Now, you'd better go. Thank you for coming with me. And here are a couple of nickels for you."

"Father says I'm not to take money."

"What? I should say you're not overrich by the look of you. Eh? Suppose you folk down there haven't got more bawbees than me, have you? You pay your debts with colored pebbles and mica quartz, don't you? . . . Gad! I verily believe there's something uncanny about you after all. Just tell me, so as to make sure, what you had to-day for dinner."

"Beans and bacon," said the boy, grinning and showing his teeth.

"Well, I grant that sounds human enough."

The boy jumped up and ran away up the hill-slope.

"Heigh!" shouted Heim after him, "just tell me, laddie, have you seen a gray mare that was said to be about here?"

"A gray mare?" said the boy. "What gray mare? Why, it isn't a gray mare at all. It's a big, bare sand-patch. See! there it is. It only looks like a gray mare from a distance."

Heim Heiderieter stood gazing first at the sand-patch and then at the boy, who was now trotting away over the heath. "Strange thing," he said, "that it's always me who has such odd experiences. There was something eerie about that boy, I'm sure of it."

He went down into the valley again, and laid himself in the long gray grass beside the small clear pool.

It was not long before he heard footsteps approaching from down the valley, and saw a man, still in his prime, somewhere in the forties, with hair and beard of the hue of rye-straw, and oval face, and eyes wonderfully deep and true. Half-scholar, half-farmer. Suddenly he saw it was Jörn Uhl, and sprang to his feet.

After they had done shaking each other's hands, they lay down in the grass, one on each side of the Goldsoot, and began talking about old times. They had not seen each other for two years.

"Old Wieten's dead," said Jörn; "you knew her, didn't you?"

"Why, man, I should think I did! Do you know the sort of life they used to lead over there at Haze Farm? Thiess would sit between the table and the stove, deep in the geography of East Asia, with his feet propped up against the tiles. And then he would pitch yarns about what he had been reading. But the old chap hasn't been farther away from the Haze than the next village these ten years, never since Elsbe's return. Wieten used to sit by the stove darning and knitting, just as she used to do at the Uhl when she sat between you and Fiete Cray."

"How do you come to know all that?" asked Jörn.

"Oh, many a chat I've had with old Wieten Penn. She had a most wonderful store of knowledge in that old head of hers. She knew all the thousand and one things that have happened these fifty years past in the little triangle that lies between this quiet pool and the old town over yonder and the church spire of Schonefeld, and she had a vivid recollection of all of them. That interested us, Jörn Uhl; yes, more than all old Thiess's Manchurian lore. She was a woman

who always kept things pretty much to herself, though. She had had to build a high wall around that fantastic world within her, because stupid people laughed when they got a glimpse of it.

"And that's the reason why many deep and earnest people are so taciturn, Jörn. But to me she sometimes opened the door and let me see the house. You know, Jörn, what it's like — a good Old Saxon farmhouse, a little low in the roof, and with many dark nooks and corners, but trusty and true. . . . What do you say to Elsbe, Jörn?"

"No! what do *you* say?"

"I should have thought she would have married Fiete Cray. And he asked her, that I know. But she was against it. Do you know what she said, Jörn?"

"What! do you mean to say you've been talking about it with her?"

"Yes! why not, man? We're old friends, aren't we? 'You see, Heim,' says she, 'he's a Cray, and they're not the most reliable people in the world, the Crays. And what's more, I don't need him: I've got enough to mother already.' . . . She's mistress of Haze Farm, Jörn, and manages it better than Thiess ever did; and lays special stress on keeping six or seven good milch-cows. Thiess has to obey her, and even likes to do so. About Manchuria he can say what he likes, even before her; that's his special domain where nobody interferes with him. But when he wants to get on to other topics and talk about human life and God and the world, then he has to wait till I come, and he can go outside with me. In summer we sit on the embankment by the edge of the Haze, in winter we go into the cowshed. . . . It's a pity, Jörn, that Elsbe never marries; she would have made one of the right sort of wives who keep always their husbands and children warm."

Jörn Uhl gazed away before him. "She is content," he said, "and so is Fiete Cray. What he dreamed as a boy has all come true. He's now in charge of the Uhl, and can see the low-roofed little cottage where he was born. He has debts enough, almost as many as I once had; but he bears them more lightly than I did; and the new railway line has been a great lift for him. His business in all sorts of odds and ends — in timber and firewood and coals and sand and what

not — is flourishing. My heart's sore when I think of the clean, neat old farmyard, and how it looks now, littered about with everything; and I'm glad the old house is no longer standing. Of a Sunday he'll sometimes drive over to the Haze and drink a cup of coffee there, and chat with Elsbe and the old man. I believe things will go on so, and they'll gradually grow old without noticing it, and at last they'll leave it all and go away."

"You've had a hard life of it, Jörn; I often wonder what you yourself think about it all."

"How would you like to write the story of my life, Heim? But perhaps it's hardly the right stuff to make anything out of?"

"Your life, Jörn Uhl, has been no commonplace one. Your youth was still and quiet, decked out with all sorts of fantastic pictures. As you grew up you were lonely, and in your loneliness, without any one's help, you struggled manfully with Life's enigmas, and although you only managed to solve a few of them, the trouble was not in vain. You went away to fight for the land that lies around these water-rills of ours, and you grew hard in fire and frost, and made progress in the most important thing of all in life, you learned to distinguish the value of things. You learned what woman's love was in all its intensity, and that is the second highest that Life can give us. You laid Lena Tarn in her grave, and your father and brothers, and you looked human misery in the face and learned humility. You fought against a hard and hostile fate without succumbing, and won your way through at last, although you had to wait many a day for help. You worked your way into science with clenched teeth and dauntless will, at an age when many a one is thinking of retiring on his income, and although building, ditching, and surveying have now been your work and delight for many a year, you haven't grown one-sided, but still take an interest in all the land that lies beyond the reach of your surveying-chains, and still bother yourself with the books written by a certain friend, Heim Heiderieter by name. I wonder what stories one ought to tell, Jörn, if such a deep and simple life isn't worth the telling."

Jörn Uhl looked at him with kindly, thoughtful eyes. "What you say sounds well," said he. "And if I were to

talk matters over with you, you could put many a thing in order for me, that I have a feeling is still lying about meaninglessly. It always seems to me as though there is a big rent in my life."

"I know," said Heim, stretching his arm out over the Goldsoot toward him. "Look, Jörn. If you had had the kind, clear-headed care of a mother, and had gone smoothly and evenly into the study of science, you think your life would have had a better course; while now, as you say quite rightly, there is a break in it. You've got the feeling as though, some time or other, years ago, you got on to the wrong track, and as if you were still upon a by-path, and could only catch sight of the road you ought to be travelling from afar. But, I tell you, Jörn, — you can ask any earnest man, — there's something in every life that doesn't exactly tally, that's out of tune, so to say, and do you know why? If it were exactly in tune the sound would be too thin. And if we were always to go the way that mother would choose for us, we would turn out dull, monotonous beings. We all have to take roads heavy with sand, Jörn, before we get breadth and depth."

"Yes," said Jörn Uhl, "to have faith is everything."

"Right! That's everything!"

"Heim, Heim," said Jörn, "there come years when it isn't easy."

Heim reached out over the Goldsoot again. "I know what you're thinking of," he said. "But after all, help came at the right time, didn't it? Wieten stood by you, and your little son's laughter sounded in the farmyard. Then the door of the manse opened to you — the broad green door with the brass knocker. You got new heart there. Then came death and served you hand and foot, and smoothed your way for you. And then came a proud and bonnie girl and walked beside you, and played marbles with you on the Rugenberg. Then came your studies, and a fresh breeze blew into your life."

Jörn nodded, and said, "You know everything."

"I know but little, Jörn, and I don't like those who try to make out they know everything; but it's a fine thing to be able, sensibly and cleverly, to see good meanings hidden in things, even in the clouds that pass over the face of the sky."

"I can't express myself like you do," said Jörn, "but I'm

glad that I am of the same opinion. When I was a boy, I fixed up a chest and a room for myself according to my fancy, and used to think them the very hub of the universe, and from there I spied out upon God and the world, and felt myself on equal terms with both of them. But the older I grow the more ignorant I am, and the greater is my reverence and wonder."

"You are right," said Heim. "It's a mistake to indulge in too much talking. One should make things clear by deeds, not by words. But as we both of us have a stretch of work behind us already, there is no harm in our talking about it. After the battle the soldier's allowed to tell his comrades how strokes were dealt and strokes were parried. Now I'm off. Where are you going to?"

"I have been inspecting a lock in Brunsbüttel," said Jorn Uhl, "and now I'm going over to the Haze on foot. Kind remembrances to your wife and children, Heim!"

"The same to yours, especially the second eldest — a bonnie little lass, Jörn."

"When you come to see us, mind you don't tell either her or her mother that!"

They went up the valley to the heath road.

"And if I were to tell the story of your life," said Heim, "what title ought I to give the book?"

Jörn stood still and said gravely, "My wife once proposed 'Crafty Jack'!"

"There's some sense in that, Jörn, upon my word! Oh, these women, Jörn! But it's wrong, without a doubt. Everything they say is only half-true, Jörn. They see things flat; even an egg looks flat to them, because they only look at things from one side."

"There's something true in it, though, Heim. I don't know whether it's because I had no guiding hand in the most critical years. It's not been an easy matter for me to find the right track. I have the feeling that I have often gone long roundabout ways when it was quite unnecessary."

Heim shook his head. "All of us who didn't follow others and swear by them, but sought to understand things for ourselves, have that feeling."

"Well," said Jörn, "if the title I suggested is no use, find me another good old German name, and say when you've

finished your book, 'Although his path led through gloom and tribulation, he was still a happy man. Because he was humble and had faith.' But don't say too many wise things, Heim. We can't unriddle it, after all."

THE END.

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